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[ACCUSER AND ACCUSED.]

FAULT ON BOTH SIDES.

A Christmas Story.

CHAPTER I.

Who finds the hoffer dead, and bleeding fresh,
And sees fast by a butcher with an axe,
But will suspect 'twas he that made the slaughter.

2 Henry VI.

THERE is on record the case of an idle gentleman, a lounge and loiterer on the smooth paths and pleasant byways of life, who took great pleasure at odd times in wandering Citywards from his big West-end mansion to gaze listlessly and at his ease at the busy, bustling throng of hard workers and money-makers who pass and repass in endless ebb and flow through the great commercial thoroughfares of London.

He had no concern with them—he knew nothing of them, their ways, or their habits; but surveyed them with the cool and curious glance a naturalist might accord to a beetle or grub.

Who are they all? Where are they going, and on what errand? How do they all live? Why are they all in such haste?

If the answer is difficult to find in this case, it is still more so in another.

Have you ever wandered about among the narrow City lanes, and come upon sleepy nooks and corners where blades of grass sprout up between the stones in the roadway?

In such localities have you never found quaint dwelling-houses, with a sort of air indicative of better days, departed now, let out in chambers and offices? Have you never paused to read the names inscribed upon the doorposts, and wondered who on earth their owners could be, what their trades, and how, in the name of Columbus, their customers or clients ever found out their whereabouts?

If you have ever done these things, if by chance, led by business, by pleasure, or by curiosity, you have wandered in the nooks and corners of the City,

it is just possible that at one time or another you may have found yourself, without exactly knowing how, in St. Stylites' Yard. It is much the sort of place I have attempted to describe. St. Stylites' Church occupies one side of it, warehouses and offices the other three.

Supposing your explorations have ever led you into St. Stylites' Yard, you can hardly fail to have noticed one particular house, the door of which is for ever on the swing, giving entrance and exit to excited clerks, perspiring porters, or hurrying letter-carriers. On the doorposts of this house are two brass plates, and on these brass plates the names of Grub, Gregory, and Harcourt.

It is in the private room of Mr. Charles Harcourt, one 24th December, that our story opens.

Charles Harcourt was the sole representative of the firm whose names appeared on the doorposts. The original Grub, Gregory, and Harcourt of the brass plates had all been gathered to their fathers any time between forty and fifty years back, and other generations had reigned in their stead, the business descending from father to son, till the race of Grub and Gregory being extinct, the entire management of the house fell into the hands of Charles Harcourt, still quite a young man.

A capital man of business he was; everything he did prospered, all his speculations succeeded, and he was supposed to have almost unlimited money at his command. Perhaps it was eagerness in the race for gold that had worn from him much of his youth, and made him, at nine-and-twenty, a stern, cold, hard man, shrewd in a bargain, suspicious of everything, and unmerciful to a fault. He ruled his clerks with a rod of iron, but rewarded those well who served him faithfully.

So completely and wholly was he supposed to be immersed in commercial transactions that it came upon the house like a thunderbolt when, in the August preceding the commencement of this story, he took a week's holiday, and on his return announced that he was married. Nobody had ever given him credit for having a heart; yet it must have been a

love match, for the busy gossips soon found out that Mrs. Charles Harcourt had brought her husband no better portion than a pretty face and a graceful figure.

Following immediately after his marriage, there made an appearance at the great house in St. Stylites' Yard a young man of pleasant countenance and stylish demeanour, a gay-hearted, pleasant, jovial fellow, whose name was Gerald Talbot, and who was at once installed in a position of trust.

For the proper comprehension of this story it is necessary here to say a few words respecting the arrangement of the office.

Entering from the street, the visitor found himself in a long, low room, in which ten or a dozen clerks were for ever making entries in huge volumes, ruling red ink lines in poudrous ledgers, or casting up tremendous columns of figures in vellum bound books.

Should the visitor's business be of a private nature, he would pass through this room into another, smaller and better furnished, where, prior to the advent of Gerald Talbot, sat the two head clerks. John Walmesley was one, a man who had grown old and white-haired in the service of the firm, the very model of respectability, punctuality, and trustworthiness; Edward Duncombe was the other, a much younger man, who had been promoted to a position of trust by reason of his talent as an accountant.

It was in this room a fresh desk had been put up for Gerald Talbot, whose claim to the position was said to be a distant relationship to Mrs. Harcourt. You may be quite sure Walmesley and Duncombe both looked upon him as an intruder, while some of the senior clerks in the outer room used very strong language—in private—concerning this young fashionable upstart who had been put over their heads; but in less than a month Talbot managed to conciliate them all by his good temper, his cheerfulness, and his general willingness to oblige.

From this chief clerk's office admission was obtained to the sanctum sanctorum, the private room of Charles Harcourt; but it was not necessary for him

to pass through the outer chambers to reach his own as he could let himself in and out by a private door. So much for the internal arrangements of the office of Grub, Gregory, and Harcourt.

It was, as aforesaid, the afternoon of the 24th December, and Charles Harcourt sat in his private room. He was a good-looking man, handsome so far as the regularity of features went, but his face lacked warmth and geniality; his eyes, firm in themselves, were a cold, glittering gray; his mouth was perfect in shape, yet his lips, thin and tightly compressed, gave a hard and almost cruel expression to his countenance. Charles Harcourt was a man whom, once seen, few people would care to offend.

It had been a busy day with him; but his letters had been read and answered, and he sat leaning back in his chair with a clear desk before him. There was a look of anxious care in his face as he sat pondering deeply, occasionally referring to a slip of paper covered with figures which he held in his hand.

Presently he touched a bell, and almost instantly the outer door was opened to give entrance to Edward Duncombe.

This Duncombe was a strange man to look at. At first glance it was impossible to guess his age; at one moment he looked twenty, the next forty. With short-cropped hair, without a vestige of beard or moustache, his big, bare cheeks, of an unbacked pasty hue, were fully exposed to view. Except for an occasional twinkle in his small eyes, there was not a particle of animation in his face, and he looked, in truth, more of an unwholesome, stupid, well-fed schoolboy than what he was—a sharp accountant and a shrewd man of business.

Charles Harcourt trusted him—not implicitly, you may be sure—he was of far too suspicious a nature to trust any one a bit farther than he could see him; but he found him useful and faithful, so he kept him in his employ and paid him a good salary.

"Oh, Duncombe," said the head of the firm as his clerk entered, "Mr. Walmesley has not come back, I suppose?"

"No, sir."

"It's very awkward!"

"He went away ill five minutes after he arrived this morning. Uncommonly bad he looked; I thought he'd have a fit."

"H-m! Poor fellow. I wish people wouldn't be ill at the busiest time of the year. Where are those papers of Slingsby and Snipe's?"

"Mr. Walmesley looked them up in the safe."

"I want them. Will you—No. Stay a moment. I will get them myself."

At that moment Gerald Talbot came in, with his bright, handsome, cherry face, like a sunbeam penetrating the gloomy back office.

"What is it you want, Mr. Harcourt?" he asked.

"Some papers from the safe."

"I'll fetch them for you. What are they? I know where they are all kept," said Talbot, eagerly.

"Thank you. I will get them myself."

"No. Why should you? Give me the key. I will bring them in a moment."

Charles Harcourt looked at the lad with suspicious scrutiny, as did Duncombe, across whose face passed a momentary smile.

"You have no objection, Talbot, to my going to the safe? everything there is in its proper place, I suppose?"

Gerald Talbot coloured up to the eyes at this innuendo.

"I have nothing to do with it; I never go to it," he replied. "I conclude that if things are not in their proper places, you will know whom to blame."

Answered in a manly, independent way, Mr. Harcourt bit his lip. He was so used to cringing servility that the audacity of this new-comer, appointed to a post of trust at Mrs. Harcourt's urgent request, astonished him; but he said no more, and, signing to Duncombe to come with him, the two left the room for another apartment devoted to the storing of papers. In one corner of this chamber stood a large iron safe, in which all the most valuable documents were deposited, and towards this the employer and his clerk directed their steps.

Charles Harcourt took the key, which he rarely trusted out of his own possession, and endeavoured to unfasten the door, but, strangely enough, it refused to turn in the lock, and it was not without much difficulty that the heavy iron door was opened.

"Some one has been playing tricks," said Duncombe, then, as the door opened, he started eagerly forward. "Where is the cash-box?" he asked, in a tone of, for him, most unusual excitement.

The cash-box in question was one that had no connection with the huge receipts of "Grub, Gregory, and Harcourt." It contained a sum varying from ten to fifty pounds, never more than the latter, which was kept entirely separate from the banking account of the firm; it was the fluctuating profit of

some paltry affair that Charles Harcourt had said over and over again was not worth a tenth part of the trouble it cost; but, nevertheless, when with his own eyes he convinced himself of the truth of Duncombe's assertion it was with an anger that was almost ferocious he turned upon his clerk.

"Stolen!" he exclaimed.

"It looks very much like it."

"Who can have done it? I'll discover the rascal; I'll prosecute him; I'll have him transported, if it cost me a thousand pounds."

It was not the loss of the money that affected Harcourt, it was the unpleasant knowledge that he, the shrewd business man, had been deceived, tricked, and robbed.

"I shouldn't imagine it would cost you much time or money to discover the thief."

"Why not?"

"The whole thing lies in a nutshell. There are only three besides yourself who knew of the cash-box being kept there."

"Just so—John Walmesley, Gerald Talbot, and yourself."

"Precisely."

"Walmesley is out of the question, of course, though his being away is suspicious."

"Oh, he knows nothing of it. I should as soon suspect myself."

"That means you believe Talbot to be the thief?" said Mr. Harcourt, who had quite recovered his composure, and as he spoke he fixed his eyes searchingly on Duncombe.

"I—I never said that."

"You implied it. What are your reasons?"

"Talbot's manner was very peculiar just now; he seemed especially desirous that you should not come to the safe."

"Yes—I noticed that."

"Another thing, he is the only one who would be likely to risk so much for so little. Mr. Walmesley and I have handsome salaries, which we should hardly care to jeopardise for the sake of a few paltry pounds."

"Well?"

"Well, with Gerald Talbot it is different. He receives a very small sum, and—as far as I can make out, he has strange ways and expensive habits."

"I know nothing of his habits."

"Neither do I. He keeps his mode of living a close secret, but I know he goes out of town every Saturday, and remains till Monday, and that sort of thing costs money, Mr. Harcourt—money—and where does it come from, eh? where does it come from?"

Duncombe chuckled and rubbed his hands together—a most unusual display of feeling for him.

"Yes," said Charles Harcourt, meditatively, "it must be Gerald Talbot—it must be he."

"Yes, sir; oh, yes, it must be Mr. Talbot. Poor young man! Dear, dear, I am so sorry for him. You won't be hard on him, Mr. Harcourt, will you? It may be he's mixed up in some disreputable love affair. Dear, dear! women are always at the bottom of these matters. Ah, Mr. Harcourt, I often thank my stars I am not beautiful, and that no woman is ever likely to fall in love with me."

Charles Harcourt was paying little or no attention to his clerk. He was thinking over the state of affairs, and his thoughts were not taking a pleasant turn.

Who was this Gerald Talbot? Whence did he come? Why did his wife take so great an interest in him? She had entreated—nay, almost insisted that Talbot should have a post of trust in the office. She spoke of him in terms so friendly as to be almost affectionate. Harcourt's pride would never suffer him to acknowledge that he could be jealous of this good-looking young fellow, and he was not—yet, at times, the terms of praise in which his wife had spoken of the young man had roused in him a feeling bordering on dislike.

"It is very sad—very sad, indeed," continued Duncombe. "So young, too—poor fellow; don't be too severe upon him, Mr. Harcourt, for my sake. So nice-looking, too, and such a favourite with the ladies. Mrs. Harcourt will be sadly disappointed in him when she hears of it; won't she, sir?"

Nothing could have been more ill-timed than this remark, coming as it did in conjunction with Harcourt's thoughts.

"Hold your tongue, Duncombe!" he exclaimed, angrily. "Never mention Mrs. Harcourt's name in connection with—matters of business."

The clerk bowed and stammered an apology, and his employer remained for some moments before the safe in abstraction.

Then he proceeded to examine the lock minutely. It had been slightly injured, apparently by a clumsy key having been used by the thief to open it, but there were no signs to furnish the least clue to the identity of the robber. None of the papers or parchments had been touched. The thief evidently had

known what he was about. He had opened the safe, taken out the cash-box, refastened the lock, and gone off with the plunder without even so much as disturbing the dust on the multifarious documents which filled the iron chest from top to bottom.

"You can go back to your work," said Harcourt, breaking the silence after a long pause. "Be sure to mention nothing of this discovery to Talbot."

Duncombe looked inquiringly into the other's face, as if to read there what steps he proposed taking, but on such an impassive, emotionless face as that of Charles Harcourt there was nothing to be read.

The commercial magnate retired to his own room and turned the key in the lock.

He had not a vestige of doubt in his mind that Gerald Talbot had stolen the cash-box, but he had to liberate with himself as to what he should do.

He was minded at first to call in a policeman and give the young man in charge, but when he considered the trouble to which he would be put in attending examination and trial, he was inclined to take a more lenient view of the matter. Another consideration made him still more reluctant to prosecute. He knew full well that his wife would not believe in Gerald's guilt, not, of course, that in business matters he would allow his wife to influence him—men never do—but still—well, perhaps it would hardly be right to blast a young man's prospects for ever; besides, it would be so much trouble. The amount was small.

No; he definitely resolved he would not prosecute. He would call Gerald Talbot into his room, tell him he had discovered the theft, get some of the money back if possible, and bid him begone at once and for ever from the great house in St. Styliane's Yard.

Charles Harcourt gave a sigh of relief on arriving at this decision. Truth to tell, he was not altogether sorry at finding an excuse for getting rid of his wife's protégé. He had never liked him, yet had felt bound to be civil and kind to him; but now—now that he was a thief, of course all such obligations ceased.

He had a duty to perform, and he was bound to go through with it.

Rising from his chair, he unfastened the door.

"Mr. Talbot, I wish to speak to you," he said.

Gerald Talbot came immediately and stood before him, the very picture of an open, frank, and pleasant-looking Englishman.

"Good Heaven!" cried Charles Harcourt to himself as he looked into his clerk's face. "Is it really possible that this man can be a thief?"

CHAPTER II.

The trust I have in is mine innocence.

And therefore am I bold and resolute. 2 Henry VI.

"MR. TALBOT, the safe from which you were so anxious just now to fetch me certain papers has been opened since yesterday."

"Indeed!"

"Yes, the lock has been either forced or picked, and a cash-box containing money has been abstracted."

"The cash-box stolen!"

There was considerable surprise in the tone of this exclamation, but no guilty fear.

"Yes, sir, stolen, if you prefer the word. Have you anything to say on the subject?"

"Not I. I know nothing about it; this is the first I have heard of it. Have you spoken to the police?"

Charles Harcourt was staggered by what he considered the cool effrontery of the robber.

"Come, Mr. Talbot," he said, severely, "this assumption of innocence will not serve your turn. I have no need to summon the police; I know the culprit."

"Mr. Harcourt, I—I don't quite understand—do you mean—do you think—that is, do you suppose—"

"I mean, I think, I suppose—nay more, I know that you are the thief! Come, there is no use your clenching your fist and looking fierce. Remember, I may take your advice and summon the police."

Gerald Talbot, who had first flushed crimson and then turned deadly pale, came closer to the table where Mr. Harcourt was sitting.

"Do you mean to tell me," he said, "that you positively suspect me of this crime?"

"It's not of the least use trying to bluster. It is brought clearly home to you—don't interrupt me, sir—it is brought home to you, I say, and it is only a foolish clemency on my part that prevents you from spending your Christmas Eve in a police cell."

"Are you mad—or is this some practical joke?"

"Now, young man, this endeavour of yours to carry matters with a high hand is wholly unavailing. Restore the cash-box and its contents, and go."

Gerald Talbot was like one in a dream. He passed his hand across his forehead and through his hair, and gazed at his employer with an aspect of utter bewilderment.

"As truly as I stand before you," he cried, "I

know nothing of this robbery. Tell me who accuses me! What proofs have you against me? Oh, it is iniquitous to charge me with such a crime! Surely, Mr. Harcourt, you cannot mean it!"

"I am not in the habit of making statements unless I know them to be true. The cash-box has gone, you are the only person who could have taken it. There, I want no arguments, you need not attempt to defend theft by falsehood. Go! Do you hear me? No words! Leave at once, and let me never see your face here again!"

"You discharge me?"

"This establishment is not a nursery for thieves! Go, sir, do you hear me, or I will have in the police, and you shall be searched."

"Search for yourself!" cried Gerald Talbot, no longer able to restrain his indignant anger.

Taking from his pocket a key, he flung it on the table before his employer.

"There is the key of my desk—examine for yourself. A thief! You can believe that of me? I swear to you that I am innocent. Whatever may be my faults, I—"

"Silence, I will not listen to you! Leave quietly, or it will be the worse for you!"

"A thief! a thief!" repeated Talbot, in distracted tones. "Oh! what will Florence think when she hears this!"

"Who?" asked Charles Harcourt, furiously, rising from his seat.

"I beg your pardon—I should have said Mrs. Harcourt."

"How dare you, sir, presume to speak of my wife by her Christian name?"

"I have known her longer than you—perhaps I have loved her better—it is for her sake, Mr. Harcourt, that I refrain from punishing such dastardly lies as yours with my own right arm. You are her husband, and that protects you. Had any but you breathed a hundredth part of what you have spoken in the last few minutes I should have felled him to the ground. Yes; if I must have been hanged for it."

Talbot's attitude and expression were menacing, but Harcourt was no coward. He walked straight up to his clerk, his face white with passion.

"If my wife is the associate of thieves, I am not," he answered. "Leave the room!"

This speech roused to boiling-point the fury of the younger man. He raised his clenched fist, and another moment a blow would have been struck, but at the instant he found his arms pinioned from behind, and turning his head, he saw the unwholesome-looking face of Edward Duncombe close over his shoulder.

"Leave go of me! What have you to do with it?" cried Gerald; and he wrenched himself from the other's hold, and glared defiantly at both the clerk and his master.

"Be quiet, now—be quiet," said Duncombe, soothingly, yet mockingly.

"How often am I to tell you to leave the room and the house?" cried Harcourt.

"I am going, Mr. Harcourt—I accept your dismissal, but you have not seen the last of me. It may be I will have revenge, and that in a way you little suspect—it may be I will humble that abominable pride of yours, and make you lick the dust at my feet—it may be I shall bring you to see the folly, the cruelty, and the injustice of your conduct to-day—it—"

"Oh, Mr. Talbot, how can you speak like that to our kind benefactor, our good friend, whose Christian virtues—"

"Silence, you pitiful cur! The whole thing I believe is your doing, you sneaking hound! If you were worth the trouble, I'd break every miserable bone in your rascally skin!"

"Take care—take care what you say; I have a witness in Mr. Harcourt—the law will avenge me."

Gerald Talbot, with a gesture of contempt, turned his back on the clerk and his master, went into the outer office, and slowly put on his great-coat and hat, then as slowly passed out into the street.

Edward Duncombe saw him go; for a moment he hesitated, then, taking up his own hat, he followed quickly after the discharged clerk.

In his private room, the key turned in the lock, sat Charles Harcourt, his head resting on his hand, lost in wonder, indignation, and rage.

Can you fancy the feelings of a policeman told to "move on" by an apple woman?—of a colonel ordered to "shoulder arms" by a private?—of a beadle sent out of church by a charity boy? If you can imagine the feelings of these people under such circumstances, you may be able to form some conception of the state of mind in which Gerald Talbot left Charles Harcourt.

He had fully intended to be grand, patronising and fatherly in his admonitions to his defaulting clerk. If Gerald had gone down on his knees, and with tears streaming from his eyes, implored forgiveness,

the merchant would have been fully equal to the position; but to be defied—openly defied—by the defaulting clerk, whom he was pardoning, was a turn in the affair of which he had never so much as dreamed, and for which he was totally unprepared.

Moreover, there was a still more unpleasant colour put on the matter by the introduction of his wife's name. What had been the meaning of that speech? What interpretation could he put upon the language? Then, too, he had called her by her Christian name—what intimacy would warrant him in that? Speculating thus, Charles Harcourt's mind became filled with jealous suspicions of his wife, and Gerald's final threat: "It may be I will revenge myself in a way you little suspect," rang in his ears, and caused him a nameless fear, which even his pride—great though it was—was insufficient to overcome.

Immediately Gerald Talbot quitted the room Harcourt went to the door with the intention of summoning the police, but he hesitated, and the opportunity slipped.

As he sat his eyes fell upon the key which his clerk had flung defiantly and disdainfully on the table before him, bidding him search his desk for stolen property, were he so minded.

Charles Harcourt looked at the key, raised it in his hand, laid it down again, then, after a few moments of self-communion, once more took possession of it, and passed into the outer office. There was no one there that never-to-be-forgotten Christmas Eve. Talbot had gone—Duncombe had followed him.

The great, prosperous, and presumably happy City merchant, with a face pale as death, fitted the key with trembling hand into the lock of the desk of his late clerk, and opened it. There lay a heterogeneous mass of papers and odds and ends—books, a cigar case, a flask and other trifles. These he contemptuously thrust aside. It was amongst the letters his search lay, but his hunt was for no stolen property. He had forgotten the evil of the robbery in a possibly greater wrong. Rapidly he scrutinised the handwriting on the envelopes as he passed over Gerald's private correspondence, but he found nothing to excite his suspicions till he came upon an envelope on which was no further inscription than the initials "F. H."

In eager haste he drew out the enclosure. It was no letter. There was a photograph of a young and beautiful woman, and there was a white kid glove.

The portrait was that of his wife!

"Trides light as air are to the jealous confirmation strong as proofs of holy writ," Charles Harcourt's face was distorted with passion when he made this discovery. He thrust the envelope, with its enclosures, into his breast pocket, and, snatching up his hat, he passed through the clerk's office on his way to the street.

"Shall you be back again?" asked one of the occupants of the long line of desks.

"No!" he answered, shortly, without looking round.

"Good-day, sir—a merry Christmas to you!"

He turned at that, the words jarred so with his thoughts, and it was a long time before the speaker forgot the expression of the face which met his gaze.

"A happy Christmas." "A merry Christmas." Everybody was wishing him a happy or a merry Christmas as he passed down the lane and out into one of the big, noisy, bustling City thoroughfares; and never in the whole world did man have poorer prospect of passing a Christmas Day happily or merrily than he.

Smiles and nods he returned with scowls and frowns. He had but one object in view, and that was to hasten home and force a complete explanation from his wife.

CHAPTER III.

Discomfort guides my tongue,
And bids me speak of nothing but despair.

Richard II.

GERALD TALBOT left the office of Grub, Gregory and Harcourt in a state of burning indignation. He had been shamefully used; he was the victim of spite and slander, and he would never rest till he had cleared the matter to his own and everybody else's satisfaction, and had revenged himself on Harcourt, on Duncombe, on everybody.

He was but a young man, little more than two-and-twenty, and he was excitable, and easily led away by his feelings. By the time he reached the main thoroughfare a change came over him, his indignation melted away in the contemplation of bitter, stern truth. What was he now? A discharged clerk, a supposed thief, a penniless vagrant—that was what it amounted to, and in the whole of the big city he had not a friend to whom he could turn for assistance—not one from whom he could beg a bed or a crust.

Under these circumstances there is little wonder

that his step became slower and less elastic, and that the flush of rage which had crimsoned his cheeks died away. He never so much as raised his eyes from the pavement or looked round; had he done so he would have been aware that Edward Duncombe was following him, close at his side.

"Ah!" sighed Gerald, as he turned up a narrow side street, "if no other were involved it would be little matter; if it were not for her I should not care."

At that moment Duncombe stretched out his arm and with his claw-like finger tapped Talbot on the shoulder.

Gerald started violently.

"Don't be afraid; I'm not a policeman," said Duncombe, with a grim smile. "I want to have a few words of conversation with you."

"I decline the honour," answered Talbot, haughtily.

"Come, come, why this animosity? I wish to serve you. I'm sorry for you—I am, upon my word; but you should have managed better. Here! come in here, and have a chop and glass of stout."

Gerald declined the invitation; but Duncombe, in a wheedling, insinuating manner, gave him to understand that it would be much to his advantage to have a quiet, confidential talk with him, and that such was impossible in the streets.

Talbot suffered himself to be persuaded, and the two entered a quiet, gloomy, dingy little chop-house and took their seats in the box farthest from the door.

"This is a sad business, a wretched affair!" said Mr. Duncombe, pepping his chop. "Dear, dear! and on Christmas Eve, too, when we all ought to be so merry and so friendly."

"Did you bring me in here to tell me that?" asked Talbot, angrily. He had never liked his fellow-clerk, and he was not in the least inclined to accept his pity.

"No, no—not that—I—I—in fact, Mr. Talbot, you are a young man, and I don't like to see a young man crushed. I thought—that is, you know, I fancied if I could assist you in any way."

"Only in one way. Discover who it was stole the cash-box, and—"

A momentary grin passed across the pasty face of the accountant. Talbot saw it and paused abruptly in his speech.

"Go on, go on."

"I have nothing more to say."

"What are you going to do? Where do you intend to go?"

"I—I hardly know; into Kent, I think."

"That is right. Rusticate till the affair has blown over; I would, if I were you. What part of Kent did you say?"

"Near Riversham. Why do you ask?"

"Oh, nothing—nothing! merely idle curiosity."

"It doesn't matter much where I spend my Christmas Day, I suppose. Well, I must be off."

"What train are you going to catch?"

"None."

"Going to ride, I suppose?"

"No; I shall walk."

"Walk! Why it's thirty miles to Riversham, if it's an inch!"

"I can't help that. I have no money to waste on conveyances."

Duncombe laughed in a sort of aside:

"No money! Ha, ha! that's very good—what have you done with it, eh? You don't take me in like that."

"What do you mean?" asked Talbot, rising from his seat with a face pale but full of determination.

"What I say—what I say! You can't have spent it all yet, you know. There must have been over thirty pounds."

"Do you suppose—do you mean to tell me that for one moment you believe I stole that cash-box?"

"Tut! I know you did. It's no good denying it. I'm as sure of it as if I'd seen you take it with my own eyes."

"Liar!" cried Talbot, and in a moment his fingers were on the other's throat, "liar! you know I am innocent! confess it, or I'll shake the truth out of your miserable body!"

"Help! murder!" gasped Duncombe, half choked.

"You miserable hound; you are the thief, I believe, and it is you who have thrown the appearance of guilt upon me!"

In his anger Gerald Talbot shook Duncombe to and fro upon the seat as if he had been a child, and was in a fair way of throttling him when the landlord and the waiter ran to his assistance.

"Police!" they both cried; but Duncombe signed to them to be silent, as with trembling fingers he adjusted his crumpled collar and neckerchief.

"No," he gasped, "this is no case for the police yet. I—I—will settle with this person some other time. Look you, Gerald Talbot, I neither forget nor forgive, and before many hours have passed I'll be even with you for this—mark my words! I

wished to befriend you, and this is the result. I should have made a better friend than an enemy."

"You villain!"

"Come, come, none of this," cried the landlord.

And he and the waiter, taking each an arm, bundled Talbot out of the house into the street in a moment.

"He's mad—the young man's mad!" said Duncombe; "bring in some hot brandy—strong, mind! I've plenty of work to do this Christmas Eve."

Half an hour later Duncombe left the chop-house and made his way with quick, hurried steps westward.

As he was passing down Ludgate Hill a hansom cab pulled up so suddenly as to bring the horse upon his haunches, and a tall, well-dressed man sprang out—well dressed in a peculiarly "flashy" style, with much jewellery, and sealskin collar and cuffs to his coat.

"I was just going to catch you at St. Stylites' Yard," he said.

Duncombe's unwholesome-looking face became even paler and pastier than usual.

"You—you promised me not to come there."

"Yes; and you promised me my money yesterday—where is it?"

"I haven't got it—I swear I haven't got it!"

"Well, something on account, then—five and twenty, or twenty pounds on account."

"As true as I stand here, I haven't as many shillings!"

"Gammon! Now look here, Duncombe, you've made a fool of me long enough. I shall call on Mr. Harcourt and appeal to him."

"No, no; for pity's sake don't do that. You'll lose me my situation. I'll give you everything I have—I'll pay you every farthing, only give me time; but don't go to Harcourt!"

"I must have at least five-and-twenty on the twenty-sixth," said the man, coolly lighting a cigar.

"I will do my best, indeed I will; I made sure of having some money yesterday, but I couldn't get it—I couldn't raise a sixpence."

"Five-and-twenty the day after to-morrow, or I call in St. Stylites' Yard. You understand that?"

"Yes, I will do all I can—yes, there is one way!" And Duncombe's face darkened. "Yes, you shall have the money on the twenty-sixth."

"All right. Don't forget now, or you know the consequences."

"I won't forget," answered Duncombe as his companion sprang again into the cab, and was driven rapidly away.

It seemed that Edward Duncombe's Christmas Day was not likely to be happier or merrier than Charles Harcourt's or Gerald Talbot's.

(To be continued.)

THE Queen did a graceful act of courtesy in visiting the Empress Eugénie at Chislehurst. Her Majesty has thus added her name to the long list of those who have already paid their respects to the devoted wife of Napoleon the Third.

THERE is living at Rathkeale, county Limerick, a woman named Mary Connors, who has reached the age of 105 years. She was born and married near Croon, in that county, and has had nine children, three of whom are now living—the eldest being 75 years old.

THE AUTOMATONS OF THE STRASBURG CLOCK.—The movable statuettes or automatons have more especially the privilege of attracting the multitude. These automatons appear in two distinct compartments, both of them representing chambers with ogival arcades. The four ages of human life, as well as Death, which are employed to sound the quarters and the hours, occupy the lower part. Four small figures, whose movements imitate nature, appear in turn to sound the quarter hours; the second stroke alone of which is rendered audible, the first being struck by the genius with the sceptre in the lion's tower. At each hour the child commences the procession, and announces the first quarter by means of a thyrus, which he allows to fall upon the bell. He is followed by a youth, who, in the form of a hunter, strikes with his arrow the half hour. Afterwards there comes a man, under the figure of a warrior, who is clad in iron, and armed with a sword, which he makes use of to sound the third quarter. Finally, a moment before the hour strikes, we see an old man arrive, who, warmly clad and with drooping head, leans upon a crutch, with which he sounds the fourth quarter. Each of these figures, on coming out of its apartment, takes two paces to come near a bell which is suspended close at hand. Having arrived there, it stays the time necessary for striking the number of strokes wanted, after which it disappears to make room for the automaton which comes after. Death, armed with a scythe, stands upon a slab in the midst of the room reserved for the four ages. At the completion of each hour the hideous figure is observed gravely to let fall on

the bell at his right the bone which he carries in his hand. Indefatigable, he watches day and night, sounding the hours without cessation. The four ages, on the contrary, symbols of mortal man, only perform their duty during the day.

SCIENCE.

EXTENSIVE SALT DEPOSIT NEAR BERLIN.—The boring at Spereberg, near the city of Berlin, about twenty-five miles to the south, had reached, on the first of June last, a depth of 3,090 feet, and for 2,810 feet is through a bed of rock salt. How much deeper the deposit is remains to be tested by further boring. The deposit appears to be quite as rich as the famous Stassfurt mines.

AT a recent meeting of the Academy of Sciences, Paris, M. Marié-Davy announced, as the result of careful experiments, that lunar radiation is incapable of raising the temperature of an air-thermometer, coated with lamp-black, even the millionth of a degree. This is equivalent to saying that there is no heat radiant from the moon, which is a result directly at variance with that communicated to the Royal Society by the Earl of Rosse.

SPOTS ON JUPITER.—Some of our readers may like to know that on Thursday, the 17th ult., there were four black spots to be seen on the planet Jupiter about 2 a.m.; three on the dusky belt below the equator, and nearly equidistant from each other; a line connecting them and the planet's limb would be about two-thirds of its diameter. Also, one and two hours previously, two spots on the dusky belt above the equator, and nearly close to the planet's limb.

AN ICE LENS.—It is interesting to observe that radiant heat from the sun may be collected into a focus by means of an ice lens, and yet produce all the effects of an ordinary burning-glass. Such a lens, for experiment, may easily be made by placing a flat cake of ice upon a warm concave surface of metal or porcelain dish, such as an evaporating dish used by chemists; as soon as one side has assumed the proper form, the ice must be turned to make both sides alike. Any sunny, crisp, frosty morning will be suitable for this experiment; from which we learn that in Northern regions it would be quite possible to raise a fire without matches—a fact not altogether unworthy of being known.

DETECTING ADULTERATION OF MILK.—There is no difficulty in finding the quantity of water contained in milk, but it has not been easy to determine whether a high percentage has been due to the natural poorness of the milk, or to the subsequent addition of water as an adulteration. But it is thought that a reliable test exists in the specific gravity of the serum, or liquid portion of the milk, from which the casein and fat have been removed by coagulating and straining. The gravity of this liquid varies from 1.026 to 1.028, and is remarkably constant. By ascertaining the specific gravity of the serum of genuine milk diluted with various quantities of water, a standard of comparison may be obtained that can be relied upon, within a few per cent., to determine how much water has been added to any sample that may be examined.

COLD BY EVAPORATION.—M. Fosselli has announced to the Paris Academy of Sciences that he has succeeded in producing an amount of cold just below the zero of the Fahrenheit scale by simple mechanical action creating rapid evaporation. He employs a wheel formed of a spiral tube, both ends of which are open, set vertically, and half immersed in the fluid to be cooled, so that the latter passes constantly through the whole length of the tube, half of which is constantly above the liquid, and, being wet, gives rise to active evaporation and consequent refrigeration within it. The evaporation is increased by a small fan. The principle is well known, but the multiplication of the points of evaporation by mechanical arrangement is ingenious; and in hot, dry weather even a disc of iron turning rapidly in liquid would produce refrigeration.

ACTION OF HEAT UPON COAL.—If powdered coal, after having been dried until its weight remained constant, be heated in a drying oven from 356 degrees to 360 degrees Fahrenheit, it has been found by Dr. Richter that there is a constant increase of weight up to a certain point, after which it begins to diminish. After twelve hours' heating the increase amounts to several per cent. of the original coal—after twenty hours it reaches its maximum, and further heating causes it to lose weight. Coal which has thus been heated has simply its external appearance in common with the original sample. It has a higher specific gravity, in one instance going up from 1.275 to 1.453, and its chemical constitution is different. If we compare the composition of dry coal with the heated, the latter shows much less carbon and hydrogen, and a considerable increase of oxygen and nitrogen. An accurate analysis demonstrated the loss of hydrogen to be 0.74 per cent.,

and of carbon 1.17 per cent., while the increase of oxygen and nitrogen occasioned by the test was 6.07 per cent. If the heated coal be made red hot, it no longer yields coke, and does not materially change in appearance. If it be heated rapidly, an exceeding great swelling up takes place, and the escaping gases which carry off the carbon in powder, burn with a non-illuminating and not-smoking flame. Finally, the heated coal absorbs water from the air more rapidly than the dry coal.

THE IRON MINES OF RUSSIA.—The declension of iron manufacture in Russia arises chiefly from deficiency of fuel, and the great distance of the mines from the centres of commerce and civilisation. The iron industry in Russia owed its origin to Peter the Great, and, 150 years ago, vast mines were wrought and great works erected. The empire seems to produce every description of ore, and each in great variety. In the Altai and the Oural, vast masses of magnetic ore are found. There are various other directions where magnetic ore is found in smaller deposits. Very fine ore for the purpose of steel manufacture is extracted in several districts. Ordinary ores are much more abundant, and are discovered over a wider area of country. In the centre of Russia red oxide is the prevailing yield. One great advantage is that a deep iron mine is not known in Russia; whenever the metal is found it is near the surface. It would be impossible to estimate the resources of this country in iron; probably it exceeds that of any other country in the world.

NERVE TELEGRAPHS.—Within the flesh or muscular part of the body are two distinct sets of nerves, namely, the motor and the sensory nerves. By the sensory nerves the brain receives intelligence of all outward actions, and the mind becomes conscious of external things, such as light, scent, sound, taste, and touch of pain or pleasure. The motor nerves, on the other hand, convey the intelligence or will of the mind from the brain to the outward world, by directing the muscular motion. If the brain desires the hand to strike the strings of a harp, it does so by the motor nerves; but the sound which is returned is conveyed to the brain by the sensory nerves. Intelligence from the brain to any part of the body, and conversely, is conveyed by the nerves at a velocity of 112 feet per second; that is at a speed of one mile in 47 seconds. Quick as this may appear, the time between a wound given and the pain felt is appreciable. By what means the mind or will acts over the nerves we are unable to say. Persons who have what is figuratively termed "an iron will" can endure pain with almost stoical indifference. Neither tears nor laughter seem to move them. Others there are who have so little command over their nerves that trivial things affect them greatly. To train the mind to exercise its will over the nervous system is highly beneficial.

ICE PAPER.—Paper may be made to resemble the figures produced by the flakes of snow or the freezing of water on a window pane by allowing a salt to crystallise upon its surface. During the Paris Exposition card paper thus prepared from sugar of lead was very popular, but it was discovered that the lead salt turned black, and its poisonous character soon brought it into disrepute. A new mixture without lead has been suggested by Fischer—it is prepared as follows: Dissolve six ounces sulphate of magnesium in six ounces of water and add six ounces dextrose mucilage paste. The solution is boiled, a little glycerine dropped in, and the whole allowed to cool. The paper, after having been previously glazed with a coating of glue and gelatine, must be uniformly covered with the solution and left to dry in a warm place. After ten or fifteen minutes the surface of the paper will be covered with an uniform cluster of crystals, the size and number of which will be dependent upon the concentration and temperature of the bath and also of the heat at which it is dried. If the paper be glazed with a solution of egg albumen instead of glue and gelatine, it can be beautifully dyed with aniline colours previous to immersion in the solution of sulphate of magnesium. This kind of ice paper does not undergo any change in sulphuretted hydrogen gas, and is not poisonous.

WALES is establishing a middle-class college, on the principle of the University College, London. It is to afford a good education to boys of the middle class, and it is to be non-sectarian. The fees are to be moderate. A building has already been taken at Aberystwyth, and more than 17,000l. has been promised.

RUMOURS of the Prince of Wales intending to have a residence in Ireland having long since died away, it is pleasant to hear that His Royal Highness has accepted the Presidency of the Royal Agricultural Society of Ireland for next year, and that he will attend the show. As the sister country so much depends on her agriculture, and as this is the leading agricultural society in Ireland, it is well that the Prince should give an impetus to the exhibition.



[AMY'S FLIGHT.]

AMY ROBSART.

By BRACEBRIDGE HEMYNG.

Author of "Heart's Content," "Evander," &c., &c.

CHAPTER XVII.

Sorrow breaks seasons and reposing hours.—
Makes the night morning, and the noontide night.

In pursuance of the plan of action agreed upon between herself and her mistress, Janet received the medicine which her father brought from the pretended Doctor Masters, and assured him that the countess would take it immediately; but she discreetly threw the contents of the bottle away, leaving the empty phial in a conspicuous position.

It went somewhat against the young Precisian's conscience to thus stoop to deceit, though she laid a snare to it by thinking that the end she had in view was good, and justified the means, however reprehensible they might be, and she considered herself assuredly right in holding that it was better to protect the health and perhaps the life of an innocent and virtuous lady than to injure it by lending herself to the infamous plans adopted by her father and his associates.

When the afternoon came the girl made an excuse to gain permission to go to the village, and tripped across the fields in the direction of Cumnor. Her hopes rested in the co-operation of the pedlar, who, being in the employ of Tresillian, might at least be trusted with Amy's intended flight. If he, disheartened, had left the "Black Bear," her task would be rendered comparatively difficult, for she could not accompany Amy in her journey, and it was doubtful if the countess would be able to accomplish such a hazardous enterprise alone and unaided.

Giles Gosling, mine host of the "Black Bear," was standing, as was his wont when custom was slack, at the door of his inn when Janet approached, and much he marvelled to see the daughter of Anthony Foster, to whom a public-house was an abomination, a standing nuisance, and a national reproach, come towards him. Four of the clock had just struck. It was a fine, clear day, somewhat hot, but a pleasant westerly breeze made it agreeable weather for the time of year.

"By'r lady!" he exclaimed, using an exclamation not much in vogue in those Protestant times, but which the former reign of Mary had rendered familiar. "'Tis Janet Foster! What wants she with me? Give you good day, miss."

"A good day to you, Giles Gosling," returned Janet. "Can you inform me if you have a pedlar staying at your inn? He has goods which I would

buy, and I hear the damsels of the county side speak highly of his gauds and toys, though belike he will have in his pack something simple, befitting a plain body like me."

"Nay, mistress, there you do yourself wrong," Giles Gosling hastened to say, impressed by the girl's becoming figure and pretty face, which was rather enhanced than impaired by her demure manner. "A half-kirtle of satin would become you as well as any lady in the land, though your thick pile velvet would not suit me so well as my leathern jerkin and my homespun hose. But the chapman you speak of is still in the mood to honour my poor house, though he does little in his trade for a travelling merchant, spending more time within doors than without. What ho! John Tapster, call Master Barfoot; a customer waits for him."

"Coming, mine host," cried a voice in the passage, which was none other than honest Jack Barfoot's, who had heard himself called for. "Your opinion of me is not so high as it might be. What if I haunt not wakes, and fairs, and bearbaitings? Do I not know mine own business? Sooth, if it is a lady I have to please, I have golden quoifs and stomachers and ballads in print, both very pitiful and mirth-provoking; the latter shall purge melancholy from every Pensive in the country."

By this time he had reached the doorway, and on recognising Janet had some difficulty in repressing an ejaculation of surprise, but a quick gesture from her warned him to be silent, and, demeaning himself in a proper manner, he asked her what her pleasure might be.

Janet replied that she had need of a few things which she would enumerate if he would follow her to Cumnor Place, where she might make her choice under her father's sanction, and she added:

"If you will accompany me I will lead the way, and we can strike a bargain without delay, if your prices are not too much in excess of what I have been in the habit of paying."

"Mercy on us, mistress," said Barfoot, assuming a jaunty air, the better to deceive Gosling. "Don't take me for a Jew, an Ebrew Jew. I could find it in my heart to give all I have in my pack to such a dainty duck a dear-a, as the song has it. My ruffs, white as snow though they be, would pale before a skin which is as soft as dove's down."

"What talk is this?" exclaimed Giles Gosling, opening his eyes. "An you deal in such fustian stuff as this, no wonder you sell to the ladies at high prices; for, I warrant me, they would rather have a few pretty compliments any day than a new gown."

"There you mistake, Master Gosling," said Janet,

with a smile. "The weight of the flattery depends upon whom it is uttered by, and the effect of silly nonsense talked by a chapman is as nothing to a sensible girl, who only endures it because she cannot avoid it."

"Well said. Odda, my life, 'tis a hard bit, master pedlar," answered Gosling, laughing till the tears ran down his cheeks. "Methinks you will hesitate now ere you give your wares away. Save the mark!"

Barfoot pretended to look crestfallen, and muttered that if the lady would walk slowly up the village, he would shoulder his pack and follow her at a respectful distance, adding that he hoped no offence was given, as he had meant no harm.

Janet bade him make haste, and, nodding to the host of the "Black Bear," wended slowly homewards.

"I'll warrant me," said Gosling, to himself, as he followed her with his eyes, "that the pedlar is wanted more for the pretty linnet they have caged up there at the Place than for austere Mistress Janet, whom a few yards of taffeta would last as many years. By my troth! Master Barfoot," he exclaimed, aloud, as the pedlar reappeared, ready for his journey, "your head must be as thick as Tewkesbury mustard not to know the difference between a Precisian and a Galloway nag."

"May I be tossed in a blanket," answered Barfoot, "if I meant any harm. 'Tis a way I have when talking to girls, and after all they like it. Prepare me an apple-John, and a sherry sack by my return. I shall do business enough to warrant that extravagance in spite of your railillery, may my beard grow on the palm of my hand else."

"Wish you luck, sir," rejoined Giles Gosling, the acquaintance being at once merged in the customer. "Your bidding shall be done, say in two hours' time from this."

With a careless inclination of the head, Barfoot walked after Janet, whose figure he despaired in the distance. He did not hurry his pace, because he had no desire to overtake her before she got quit of the village, lest the Berkshire gossips should comment upon the fact of his talking familiarly to her instead of showing her the contents of his fardel.

That his help was required on Amy's account he did not doubt, and he rejoiced in the fact, because any active intervention on his part, used on her behalf, could not fail to be pleasing to his patron, Tresillian, by gratifying whom he hoped to improve his fortunes.

When the last house was out of sight he quickened his steps and overtook Janet, saying:

"In what way can I serve you, mistress? It will be best for us to hold speech on the road, for if I approach too near Master Foster's house, I fear the report of a caliver, or some such deadly weapon, may make a hole in my poor skin which shall let in daylight. I'd as lief eat rat's bane as meet that fiend, Dick Whistler, who lives with him, and who will one day break a gallows' back. If he saw us in converse he would suspect something, and I should not escape with all my joints whole."

"It is not my intention to expose you to any danger," rejoined Janet. "I merely want to devise with you some means of assisting my lady to escape from the thralldom in which she is held."

"Is it come to that?" said Barfoot, gleefully. "I am her man. Once under the queen's protection, or even in the train of the Earl of Sussex, she is safe."

Janet had stopped under the shade of a large elm, and, looking at the pedlar, said:

"I am inclined to trust you, because you have a fairly honest face, and you come, as you say, from Master Tresillian, in whom my lady has confidence. She is in great danger from the wiles of Varney, and the medicines compounded by a man of art, whom he brought with him from London. This very night she purposes to leave the house. Can you provide two horses—one for her, the other for yourself?"

"Yes, that can I," answered Barfoot, after a moment's reflection. "In what direction does she purpose to order her going?"

"To Kenilworth."

"Sooth!" cried Barfoot, "that is bold indeed; yet, on consideration, I see no wiser course. The Earls of Leicester and Sussex are commanded to meet the queen at the former's castle. The lady will have open hearing against this Varney. They will all be red with mirth, which matters little. Elizabeth loves justice."

"On our own hopes depend," rejoined Janet. "If you fail us, we are undone. Be at the postern gate in the garden wall at midnight with the horses—a pillion for the lady. Do your best endeavours, and I can promise you a royal reward."

"I want none for succouring a woman in distress, especially when I am obeying my patron's orders," generously rejoined Barfoot. "I will be there, mistress, and—"

He hesitated, breaking off abruptly.

"Well—what now?" asked Janet, shortly.

"I trust you have pardoned my humble foolery just now at the inn door, though, sweet maid, 'twas no natery, but the honest truth I spoke," said Barfoot, glancing at Janet with evident admiration.

"Sir!" rejoined Janet, with quiet dignity. "This is no time for such speeches. I am poor, simple, and unprotected; we know little of one another. You are aware of the object with which I sought you. Believe me, my whole soul is wrapt up in that one thing."

"Since I have taken it in hand, consider it settled, for what man can do that will I," Barfoot rejoined, with more than his usual assurance. "But tell me, if you have reason to be satisfied with my future conduct, and our good fortune should bring us together again, will you try to listen more calmly if I dare to talk softly of—of love, which you have given birth to in—"

"I beseech you, sir," Janet interrupted, while a flush mounted to her pale face, "not to press me now. I know nothing of what you speak about. 'Tis foreign to my experience. In happier times, perhaps, I might not be unwilling to be educated to that point."

"Sweet Janet!" cried Barfoot, seizing her hand rapturously and raising it to his lips, which impressed a caress upon it, "you have made me the happiest of men by the utterance of those few words. I am thy knight henceforward—will do battle for thee or any friend of thine, even against those men of sanguinary minds, the miscreant Varney and his base Assyrian knave, Dick Whistler, for whom whipping cheer were too good."

Janet withdrew her hand without marked displeasure, and repeating her expectation and wish that Barfoot would be ready with the horses at midnight, she shook the brawny fist he extended to her, and hastened home; he returning to Cunnor to make the preparations which were necessary for the important step contemplated by Amy, in which he was to assist, and which, if not well managed, might bring him something worse than a broken head and a bad beating.

During Janet's absence the countess had been a prey to severe anxiety, and it was with unforgotten joy that she threw her arms round her attendant's neck to welcome her return.

"Well, Janet," she exclaimed, "will the travelling merchant help us in our hour of need? Was he willing? Did you promise him great reward, and the favour of the Earl of Leicester?"

"That would have availed little, madam, for, if I

am not mistaken, he is of the opposite faction," answered Janet, "yet he will be at the postern gate to-night at the hour of twelve with two horses, one of which will be provided with a pillion for your use and comfort."

"Dear girl, how can I thank you?" exclaimed the countess, her eyes sparkling with delight. "Say you will come and live with me in some proud castle of my lord's when these troubles are over."

"That will I," returned Janet. "It is my great desire to be near your ladyship. I hope, indeed, for a happy issue out of all your afflictions, but I would recommend caution. Do not be hasty to assert your rank when you reach Kenilworth, for did not the noble earl impress upon you the absolute necessity for keeping his marriage secret? If his reasons are good he should be obeyed. If bad, and to your prejudice, your duty to him and to yourself does not demand that you should sacrifice your life-long interests and your good name to further his ambitious schemes. He took you for his wedded wife, and in good sooth 'twould be strange if he continued to refuse to acknowledge you."

"What do men say of me, Janet?" asked the countess, reflectively. "Does this chapman know whom he has the honour of serving?"

"Why, no, my lady. I should say his ideas are somewhat confused upon the subject," Janet answered, with slight hesitation. "I hear the idle chatter of the neighbourhood, and it runs thus: they say you are Master Varney's wife, whereas others declare that Varney is but the cloak for the Earl of Leicester, who has made no honest love to you. But men speak not openly, for fear of the Star Chamber, which would have their ears cropped and their noses slit for speaking ill of the nobility."

"The insolent varlets!" exclaimed Amy, whose face flushed a rich crimson. "I would have them flogged at the cart's tail. If such reports be abroad, it is indeed time that I asserted my position, and either sought my husband or my father."

"You could not go to Sir Hugh Robsart, madam, unacknowledged by the world as the Countess of Leicester."

"You are right, Janet. It is to my husband I must go, and we will soon end this mystery. Have I not a right, girl, to enter Kenilworth, and do the honours of my house to England's proud queen? Would any woman of spirit content her with sitting here while such grand doings are in progress? I would endure a thousand deaths first!"

"I can counsel no other course," Janet rejoined.

"To-night I will see you off safely, and to-morrow I will report that you are ill and cannot rise—you have pains and headaches, which will be attributed to the medicines of that false doctor whom they palmed off upon you as the queen's physician. If you can but get a day and a night's start you will have passed Donnington and Coventry, so that pursuit will be useless."

In this sort of conversation the hours passed until the time for the helms or flight approached. The countess, in token of Janet's services, gave her freely all the dresses and ornaments which the earl had lavished upon her in the heyday of his passion—the girl saying she would put them by until she had an opportunity of selling them, as the money would be an acceptable blessing to the poor.

After eleven Anthony Foster and Dick Whistler retired to rest, congratulating themselves that all was going on well, and that Amy would in a few hours be in a state which would warrant calling in doctors, who should sign the certificate which Dick was to bring to Varney for the earl's use at Kenilworth; it being thought that Elizabeth would be satisfied with so potent an excuse as illness.

When all was quiet in the house the two women glided like ghosts along the silent corridors where darkness reigned supreme. The side door leading into the back garden gave them egress, and they went breathlessly along a neatly gravelled walk to the postern.

No one impeded their progress. All was still as the grave, and they heard no sound save the beating of their fluttering hearts, unless it was the occasional cry of the screech owl, or the rush of a bat's wing, whirling under the trees in eccentric circles.

Being provided with a master-key, Janet easily opened the postern. A low whistle greeted her, and Barfoot came forward. The neighing and pawing of a horse showed that he had so far fulfilled his part of the compact, and Janet said:

"Heaven speed you, dear lady. Place your trust in Providence, who will help you in your righteous undertaking."

"My heart fails me, Janet," replied the countess; "I did wrong in leaving my father. Can a disobedient child hope for the protection of Providence?"

"The Scripture saith, 'Let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race which is set be-

fore us,'" answered Janet, "and you must recollect there is no fear in love—Perfect love casteth out fear because fear hath torment."

"I have been foolish, but not designedly wicked," Amy said. "I will hope that a true repentance and the leading of a godly life may bring happiness and contentment. You have taught me much, Janet; I am deeply grateful to thee for thy teaching; my proud spirit has been chastened. How often have I said, 'Oh! that I had wings like a dove, for then I would fly away and be at rest!'"

"Ah! madam," said Janet, whose eyes filled with tears, "if you only know how pleased I am to hear you speak thus! It is not a small thing to sow the seeds of good in another's mind. I pray you continue humble, for 'Pride goeth before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall.'"

Much to Barfoot's delight, who was growing impatient at the delay, the countess embraced her attendant and intimated that she was ready to mount her horse, which he assisted her to do, soon after getting astride his own beast, though not before he had given Janet a kiss in the dark, which brought him in return as sound a box on the ears as it had ever been his lot to receive from the hand of woman.

"Now, madam," he said to Amy, "keep close by my side along these dark roads, and ho! for Donnington!"

Janet waited till the sound of their horses' footsteps died away in the distance, and, with a sigh, wended her solitary way back to her father's house, which remained as silent and sepulchral as when she had quitted it half an hour previously.

CHAPTER XVIII.

My man's as true as steel.

As we know, Alcazar was an enthusiast in his art. He fully believed that if he worked hard enough and lived a sufficiently long life he would become possessed of the great arcana or secret, for the attainment of which philosophers in many ages have toiled in vain. His object was to discover, first, the mode of transmuting base metals into gold, secondly, to form diamonds from carbon. He knew that carbonic acid gas is found in some diamonds with a flaw in them, and upon this he based his calculations.

As Janet passed the laboratory in which he worked during the silent watches of the night, she saw a light, and by its aid peeped into his sanctum, looking curiously and not without awe upon this singular being, who, to her superstitious mind, was leagued with the powers of darkness for some unholy purpose.

The chroniclers of the time do not deal very tenderly with this physician employed by the Earl of Leicester, who was known by his contemporaries under the name of Dr. Julio, as well as that of Alcazar; in fact he employed both names at will.

It was said that he was of Italian origin, and accounted a skillful compounder of poisons, which he applied frequently, so that Leicester's good luck in ridding himself of rivals and enemies was put down to the account of Alcazar, whether wrongly or rightly we do not pretend to say. The husband of Lady Sheffield, upon whom Leicester looked with a favourable eye, died quickly with an extreme rheum in his head. The Earl of Essex, an enemy of Leicester's, also died of an extreme flux, caused by an Italian recipe sure in its operation prepared by this cunning man.

Though these people died outwardly of known diseases, such as the excellency of the Italian's art that he could make a man die in what manner or show of sickness he liked. He would maintain openly that poison might be so tempered and given that it would not appear presently, yet should kill the party afterwards at any appointed time, which showed the great cunning and skill of the artificer.

In those days the union of poisoner, quack-salver, alchemist, and astrologer in the same person was familiar to the pretenders to the mystic sciences.

While Janet's face was against the window pane the man of art stirred up the contents of a crucible placed over his fire, and added something thereto. The result must have exceeded his expectations, for, in an instant, a flash of fire escaped, followed by a great cloud of smoke, which was succeeded by a loud noise. Several panes of glass were broken, and Janet fell back, more alarmed than hurt, though she received a severe shock.

Unable to restrain her fear, she ran to the house, screaming at the top of her voice.

Immediately lights flew about the mansion, and, as she entered by the side door, her eyes starting from her head, and her dishevelled hair blowing in the breeze, she encountered her father with a candle in his hand, who marvelled at seeing her, and said: "You, Janet! outside at this hour! What means this? Why this hubbub?"

"Oh, father!" she replied, hysterically, "go to the

man of art, if indeed he be not spirited away. His evil spirits have been to him, and he fancied they were tearing him limb from limb!"

"Go to, silly girl!" exclaimed Anthony Foster. "What childishness is this? Wait you here while I inquire the cause of the explosion, which indeed came to my ears along with your cries while I lay awake in my chamber."

He had not gone many paces before he met Alcazar, his beard singed by the flames, but otherwise unhurt, who hastened to explain that no harm was done.

"It was but putting too strong an infusion of the villainous saltpetre amongst inflammable materials," he said. "A few panes of glass are easily repaired, and I have come to allay any alarm you might have felt, and to say methought I saw a face, a girl's face, at the window, though it straightway disappeared."

"It must have been Janet," exclaimed Foster, adding to his daughter: "To your chamber, jade, and await my coming on your knees. I must have an explanation of this midnight gadding."

Janet went away with bowed head just as Dick Whistler appeared upon the scene.

"What a plague is this?" he exclaimed. "Never have I heard such a riot since I served in the Low Countries. Has the foul fiend come to claim our man of art now the time specified in the bond is complete?"

"Twas but an accidental explosion," said Foster.

"The fewer he has of them the better, if my rest is consulted," rejoined Dick. "May I lay my head in the lap of the furies, if I did not think the enemy was upon us! Samingo! It was most excellent witchcraft. Come, Foster! come Tony! mine old friend and associate, by the Mass! we'll crack a quart together, brick and fine, in a pottle pot, now we are awake."

"Your profane oaths like me not," answered Foster. "As for you, drink to your heart's content; the cellar is open to you. I'll none of it."

"Thou churl!" exclaimed Dick, growing angry. "Thou papistical knave! whose very ugliness would scare chough from chaff—like mouldy, sheep-whistling rogue! a fouts for such a marplot and a spoilmirth! Is it to be always thus with thee? Am I to have never a boon-companion while I waste the unwillful hours in this ghostly mansion of thine?"

"You lack nothing," replied Foster, eyeing him with openly expressed dislike.

"I lacked your companionship, thou false loon. But, snails! that is nothing. I will'en go and drink by myself, and in each draught drink deep to thy perdition."

"Thou art a mad whelp of the evil one. 'Twill be a red-letter day when I get rid of thee," answered Foster, going away to his daughter's chamber.

"Away, you rumpallion! away you pitiful rascal!" cried Dick, in a taunting voice. He would have added more had not Foster been out of hearing, so, muttering to himself, he returned to his own apartment, where he had store of good liquor, to which he did not fail to pay his respects until he was unable to find his way into bed, and slept where he fell—on the floor.

Janet had locked herself in her bedroom, and though her father knocked repeatedly at the door he was unable to gain admittance.

"Soh!" he exclaimed, "there is rebellion in mine own household against my lawfully constituted authority. We will see to-morrow how long this will last."

He walked back along the corridor, muttering "To-morrow, to-morrow!"

Janet slept little. She was haunted with a fear of discovery; not that she dreaded the result on her own account, but she was apprehensive of some evil happening to Amy if she were overtaken and brought back.

She went about her household duties as usual, but when questioned by her father respecting her presence in the garden the night before she refused to give any explanation further than that she felt ill and feverish, and thought the night air would do her good.

"There is more in this than I can fathom," exclaimed Anthony Foster. "Beware how you play with me, girl! Go now and prepare the countess for the doctor's visit."

"Her ladyship is far too unwell, father, to see any one to-day; she bade me say so," answered Janet.

"Nevertheless she must consent to see the physician. If she will not willingly receive him, you must open the door and admit him. It is my pleasure that you go to the lady at once and prepare her. In half an hour the doctor will join you," answered Foster.

In vain Janet protested. Her father would not listen to the excuses she made, or the representations of Amy's indisposition. She had to go to the apartments lately occupied by the countess, and there, in fear and trembling, await her father's coming and the bursting of the storm which was inevitable.

How slowly the minutes passed! She thought the time, short though it in reality was, would never pass,

and, strange to say, it was a positive relief when Anthony Foster and Alcazar knocked at the door.

In a feeble voice she bade them enter, and by an effort of will she endeavoured to still the tumultuous beating of her heart, while she murmured a prayer to Heaven for help and strength.

"Where is the countess?" asked Foster. "Shall we proceed to her chamber?"

Janet made no reply, and Foster, beckoning to Alcazar to follow him, pushed through the doorway, only to find that the bed had not been slept in. A terrible suspicion of what had really happened took possession of him. Janet's peculiar manner, her presence in the garden on the preceding night, all that had troubled and perplexed him now became clear. With a cry like that of an enraged panther, he sprang upon his daughter, and seized her by the arm, which was as if in a vice.

"Wretched girl!" he exclaimed, in a voice of suppressed fury, "where is your charge? What has become of the countess?"

"Her ladyship is gone," answered Janet, calmly.

"Gone! Whither?"

"I can tell you no more. All the tortures of the Spanish Inquisition could not wring a word from me," Janet said.

"Ruined! ruined!" cried Foster, in agonised tones, all his energy deserting him as he released the girl and sank into a chair, wringing his hands like one distraught. "All my hopes of preferment vanish, for what can I say to appease the wrath of Varney?"

Alcazar, with an imperturbability which he had cultivated until it became part of his composition, made no remark. He cared little for the event which had taken place, as he was in no way responsible for the safe keeping of the lady who had so ingeniously escaped.

Rising suddenly, as the necessity for action forced itself upon him, Foster, casting a vindictive glance upon his shrinking child, ran from the room, calling loudly upon Whistler, who made his appearance with a wine cup in his hand, by means of which he had been cooling his parched lips and restoring that tone to his stomach which it had lost by his excesses of the night before.

"What now, cavaliers?" he exclaimed. "Has any one given you a hundred marks, which you wish to share with me? Why, you look worse than a stuck fowl."

"She is gone, Dick, the lady's gone! and we must after her. Janet has aided her to escape. It must have been effected last night. Fool that I was not to have kept a better watch—fool! fool!" rejoined Foster, whose self-reproach added intensity to his tone.

"That's a bad business, on my book-oath! I would not have had it happen for a purse full of gold, and that's saying a great deal. We must pursue."

"Go you," said Foster, "to the village. Circulate amongst the ostlers and tapsters of the inn; pick up intelligence; while I have two horses saddled, so that we may take the road without delay—and, Dick, dear Dick, keep from the liquor. You can be sober, an you like. It is not a time for swaggering."

"You muddy conger!" said Dick, who was as yet only partially sober, "may I be swinged if I allow such liberties from any one! What! because you were once a Roman, and ate only a joint of mutton or two in a whole Lent, and are now a demure Precisian the better to cloak your hypocrisy, must I put up with your insolent humours? Go to! thou fustian rascal, thou art an arrant knave."

"For the love of Heaven! Dick, place some check on your tongue. We must not braw!" said Foster, pleadingly. "Think of Master Varney. We know not what may come of this work."

"A floc for Varney!" answered Dick Whistler.

"What! cannot we live and thrive without villain Varney? I would throw him into the kennel an he said an uncivil word to me. My ancestors have been men of war, and fought in the Roses—did not John of Gaunt compliment my grandsire, and say he was the best bowman in all the country side? Could he not carry you a four-hand shaft at fourteen-and-a-half? May I be as ragged as Lazarus before I'd kneel to villain Varney. But I'll away to the village. We'll pursue, Tony, we'll pursue."

It was with a feeling akin to joy that Foster saw Dick take his departure for the village. He was absent an hour and a half, and when he returned he found Foster, booted and spurred, awaiting his coming, while two spirited horses neighed and champed their bits in the roadway.

"Well, thy news?" demanded Anthony Foster.

"Brave news! We'll have them both in limbo before long," answered Dick.

"Both?" Foster ejaculated.

"Yes, my mad Gospeller, the lady has an Ephesian in her company, and, if my information be good—and I have no reason to doubt it—he is the same pedlar I have seen at the 'Black Bear' who, from a letter I

have seen in his pack, should be a spy of Tresillian. He's a man of milk, a tame cheater—we need fear him not. To horse! Away! If my Toledo crosses his rapier, happy man be his dole, say I."

"What direction took they?"

"You must know that John Ostler's suspicions were roused when the travelling merchant asked for a couple of steeds, and took them away at midnight. He, like a sensible fellow, followed, keeping well out of sight behind a hedge. What saw he? Marry! a lady came through your postern, and mounted one, while the pedlar got on the back of the other horse, and thus they started along the road for Donnington."

"That should lead to Kenilworth. I'll warrant they've gone to Kenilworth. Oh, the sorrow this work will bring!"

"Oons!" said Dick, reflectively. "I should not wonder if thy wit has not hit the nail upon the head. Up saddle! Whip and spur, Tony, whip and spur! We'll save the ship yet!"

In another minute they were in the saddle, and cantering quickly along the road to Donnington. We must leave them at present while we return to the fugitives, who were making as good way as could be expected, and were that very moment preparing to leave the town where they had snatched a few hours' sleep, which was absolutely indispensable to the lady.

CHAPTER XIX.

Come not between the dragon and his wrath.

For this relief much thanks.

HAVING been travelling the best part of the night, it was near midday when they left their comfortable quarters at the "Angel" inn, of Donnington, and pursued their perilous journey, for perilous it was to both of them, Barfoot having to fear condign punishment, and Amy re-imprisonment, if overtaken by Varney or his satellites.

After urging their horses along a level road for a few miles, they came to a hill, which they ascended at their leisure, giving their cattle time to breathe, and it pleased Amy to hold some conversation with her attendant, who was so far respectful as not to take the liberty of speaking to her unless distinctly addressed, or it was necessary to mention some matter of importance connected with their journey.

"My heart feels lighter," she exclaimed, "though I am still oppressed with fear and anxiety. I am, indeed, much beholden to you for your services rendered to me. You shall have a fitting reward."

"Have you considered, madam, how you are to enter Kenilworth?" asked Barfoot. "I'll engage that strict watch and ward will be kept."

"Have I not a right?—but no, that concerns not you," Amy said, correcting herself. "My object is to see the Earl of Leicester; all will then be well."

"It will be advisable to represent ourselves as having somewhat to do with the pageant," continued Barfoot. "I could counterfeit a man of art, an astrologer and quack-salver, for that truly was once my vocation. Perhaps at Coventry we may be able to procure a dress which would suit the character, and you could pass as my sibyl. Between us we could tell a fortune or cast a horoscope. But I will elaborate that idea during our progress, lady; and now that we have reached the top of this hill I pray you push forward, as I would not for the world encounter that hanger-on of Varney, that sack-butt Dick Whistler, who can make pretty play with his fencing iron, and wield a cudgel as well as any of them at Bartholomew fair."

Although Amy had confessed to feeling some apprehension, she fully anticipated that when she saw the earl he would gladly receive and acknowledge her, or should he fail to do that, for certain cogent reasons which she determined he should explain to her most fully, she expected that he would make some arrangement for her future residence which should be more congenial to her taste than her residence at Camnor Place, to which she resolved she would not return, Foster's guardianship being so thoroughly hateful to her; and she experienced some pleasure in thinking that by complaining of Varney's treatment she should succeed in getting him punished, if not dismissed, from the earl's service.

They stopped in the afternoon at a roadside inn to bait the horses and obtain some refreshment, of which they stood in need, and continued their journey under the mellow rays of a summer sun, which shed a flood of golden lustre over the country through which they travelled. Towards evening, when the sun's rays were casting lengthened shadows over hill and vale, the sound of horses going at speed struck the ears of the fugitives.

"Grn'mercy!" cried Barfoot, "that should be some one in hot pursuit. One would think it was

the hue and cry. If it should be Dick Whistler, we are lost."

"Let us increase our pace," rejoined Amy. "Once in Coventry, from which we cannot be far, I will appeal to the citizens and the justices for protection. There is law in the land."

"Night is right on the queen's highway, lady," answered Jack, trembling. "But do you ride on while I investigate this matter; it will not do to throw a chance away."

"I would not that anything should happen to you in my cause," said the countess.

"Fear not," Jack replied, with a smile. "I have more of the cunning of the fox than the courage of the lion. I come not of a fighting race. My father was a tailor of Shrewsbury, and I would rather wield the needle myself than the sword."

Amy could not help laughing at the openly avowed cowardice of her attendant, and following his instruction she went on ahead while he turned his horse and reconnoitred. He stood on the brow of a hill and could look down in the valley beneath. His eight being good and long, he had no difficulty in discerning two horsemen, whose steeds were almost ready to sink with fatigue; they were flecked with foam, and had been ridden far and hard.

"That should be Master Foster's gelding, 'tis a bay, and that other is bestrode by Dick Whistler. By my troth! we are in evil case. Soft, I think I can arrange a surprise which will stop their progress," he muttered.

Dismounting hastily, he took a long coil of rope from a saddle-bag he carried, and with which he had provided himself for an emergency of the very kind which beset him.

On each side of the road grew two saplings, which admirably answered his purpose. Being at the summit of the slight eminence, he was concealed from view, and with the utmost celerity he firmly tied the rope to the trees, raising it about a foot from the ground, and making it go the entire length of the highway.

Remounting, he walked his horse a distance of a hundred yards, and, leaning his hand on the saddle, turned round to look at the approaching horsemen, who had slackened rein to ascend the hill.

"Ha, ha!" he laughed, quietly. "I have set a trap which will cause broken knees, if not contused heads. The fox against the lion any day. Sooth, an Dick Whistler's skull be not as hard as granite, we shall see the effect of contact between bone and stone."

When the travellers became visible Barfoot raised his hat, and said, in a jeering voice:

"What ho! Master Foster—Master Anthony Foster! What ho! Dickon! Has the bird flown from the cage, and must you spoil your horseflesh in the chase to get her back again? What a couple of loons are ye, and how soundly will Master Richard Varney rate the pair of ye for being a couple of woolly-headed knaves!"

"The furies seize the fellow!" cried Dick Whistler, for it was he who, with Foster, had made incredible efforts to overtake the runaway.

"It is the travelling pedlar!" said Foster.

"None other. Mistress Amy cannot be far off. Push on, Tony; I long to try conclusions with the jibing idiot."

Setting spurs to their horses, they rushed on at headlong speed, looking straight before them, and utterly oblivious of the obstacle which had been purposely placed in their way.

Presently, the horses, going nearly abreast, came to the extended rope, and, tripping over it, fell heavily. Dick Whistler was pitched rapidly forward into a quickset hedge, the thorns making ad havoc with his flesh, while Foster tumbled on his back, and lay like one stunned in the road.

The horses both stumbled on their knees, whereby they were much cut and bruised, and utterly incapacitated from pursuing their journey, as these poor animals could only limp along at a slow pace.

"Ha, ha!" laughed Barfoot, in high glee. "I thought that plan would not fail me. It has assisted me in cutting more than one purse when times were hard and work not to be obtained. Ha, ha! Master Foster, how find you yourself? and you, Master Whistler? I hope the prickles are to your liking. The fates have not been kind to you, good-faced sir. We press on to Kenilworth, where you had best not follow us, unless you want to be soundly trounced for your pains. Alack, poor souls! you will be late for the mirth of the feast. Mercy on a sweet sir, what a roaring and a cursing are here! You roar, as it were any calf."

With the utmost difficulty Dick extricated himself from the hedge, his apparel torn, his face and hands streaming with blood, and his whole body smarting with the pain of the prickles which had entered plentifully into his skin.

"Ten thousand furies!" cried Dick, foaming with

rage, which increased as he saw the condition of the horses and the state of his companion Foster, who groaned diamally and seemed much hurt.

"Wish you adieu, fair sir," said Barfoot, in the same mocking tone. "When at Coventry I will drink to our next merry meeting. Wish you good day, Master Whistler. Ho! how you jumped into that quickset; 'twas as if a hedge was your natural and regular sleeping-place! I trust you liked your bed, sweet sir?"

Passion choked Dick's utterance. He could not articulate, but, shaking his fist at Barfoot, who was riding away, he signified that his vengeance should be sweeping when they again met, and his anger was not cooled by the mocking laughter which rang in his ears.

Jack hastened to join the countess, who was a mile in advance, and rather alarmed at seeing him clattering towards her.

"Shall we hasten?" she exclaimed. "Is it our enemies? Have we aught to fear?"

"Nothing now, lady, though it was a near shave," replied Barfoot. "Fortunate was it that I looked back, for Anthony Foster and Dick Whistler were on our track. However, I effectually stopped them, and we have nothing to dread from them for some hours to come. By cock and pie! 'twas as clean a thing as ever I did in my life!"

In a few words he related what had occurred.

Amy could not resist smiling, and complimented him on his ingenuity, which had been of such great service to them.

They then pushed on to Coventry, which town they entered in the sweet glow of a summer sunset—halting in front of a substantial inn. The ostlers pressed forward and held their horses while they alighted.

A small crowd was collected in the street, in the centre of which was a man, holding a bear by a chain.

The creature no sooner saw Barfoot than it made a prodigious bound, tearing the chain out of its keeper's hand, and rushing forward.

Those who were onlooking scattered right and left. Amy shrieked with terror, for the animal made straight towards them, and, selecting Barfoot, placed its huge paws round his neck. The crowd thought he was lost, and the keeper, seizing a stout cudgel, ran to the bear, intending to beat him off.

"Back!" cried Barfoot, "back; the animal will not hurt me." And returning the bear's caress—for it was nothing more—exclaimed: "What, my old Bruin; do we meet again! Companion of my many wanderings—dear old Bruin!"

A tear dropped from his eye, and the bear licked his face like a dog—much to the astonishment of the gazers.

"Where bought you this bear?" asked Barfoot, pushing the creature gently to the ground, and patting his shaggy back.

"At Woodstock, please you, sir," answered the keeper.

Barfoot whispered a few words in his ear, gave him some money, and the man, grasping the chain, led the bear into the yard of the inn—the beast making a plaintive, moaning noise at being parted from his old master.

Then Barfoot entered the inn with Amy, to whom he said:

"I once travelled with that bear, and the meeting is fortunate. He will be of use to me. I have brought my fox instinct to my aid again, and I have an idea which shall serve us, lady."

"I am sure," answered Amy, "that anything you suggest should have countenance from me. What a singular meeting! How the creature seems to love you!"

"Ah, madam!" rejoined Barfoot, with a sigh, "there existed between us more real friendship than you can find with many men. You know the warmth of affection which dumb animals cherish for those who are kind to them. Marry! I shall play the woman if I think of old times, and let my heart grow soft!"

This rough fellow—sport of fortune, waif on the ocean of humanity as he was—passed the back of his hand over his eyes, and was glad when the comparative darkness of the inn concealed his emotion from those without.

(To be continued.)

A MOTHER'S LESSON TO HER DAUGHTER.—What mistakes are made constantly by judging other people by our own measure of love or hatred, of preference or antipathy! How many chances one may miss, in doing this, of knowing really good and estimable persons who have the misfortune not to quite have come up to our standard. All who have lived a lifetime, well know this and are wiser. Said a young lady one day, in disgust, "Mamma takes such an interest in and is sociable with al-

most everybody." "My dear," was the reply, "your mother has lived long enough to know that perfection is out of the question; that real friendship is rare, and that we must all fill up the chinks with acquaintances more or less agreeable, as the case may be."

THE DIAMOND COLLAR.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

Joy, gentle friends, joy, and fresh days of love
Accompany your hearts!

Midsummer Night's Dream.

It was the end of the month which had been fixed as the time when Lord Edgar would bring home his bride to Berney Wood.

Ladies Josephine and Oriana Berney were eager to welcome the dear princess as their sister, and flitted from window to window of the stately mansion watching the road for the carriage.

The earl and countess, in an equally complacent state of anticipation, waited in the great hall, where the knight of the golden hair used to lie, staring at the stone roof, while Thunder and Mutineer snored on the tiger-skin beside him.

The servants of the house were congregated in the front vestibule in decorous order, ready to receive the illustrious bride with that honour which Earl Lonsdale conceived to be becoming towards a lady of her illustrious, albeit unacknowledged, rank.

"Yonder they come!" cried Lady Josephine, gliding to the window for the last time, and a rich bloom mantled in her clear dark cheek as she described the white favours fluttering. Oriana pressed beside her sister, and her shy, violet eyes lit up with eagerness.

"They sit side by side—Edgar and his lovely Frederica. He is bending towards her; he is gazing earnestly into those beautiful blue eyes, which made her the choice of the brutal crown prince. Ah, what a superb woman! What an ethereal charm she has! What royal majesty beams from every glance! How shall we ever be able to preserve the secret of her identity? She is too beautiful to pass unnoticed. But we will be so careful of her! Look, Oriana! is she not a very princess? Is that perfect creature really our sister?"

Lady Josephine's eyes sparkled with triumph and joy, but a mist of gentle emotion floated in Oriana's. "Ah, what griefs she has suffered! We are her only friends now; all the rest are dead. We must be their compensation to her!"

They hurried out hand in hand after the earl and countess, and took their places to welcome the bride. Peaceful as a summer morning was her countenance, and her eyes shone softly with her heart's full content.

She leaned upon her stately knight with a confidence which was in itself an act of affection; and he regarded her with that thoughtful depth of eye, almost mournful, which bespeaks the adoration of the soul. So lovely a lady and so stately a knight—when was such a pair transcended?

"Welcome home, Lady Berney!" exclaimed the grand old earl; and with a smile that made him captive she gave him her sunny brow to kiss.

"Welcome to our hearts, my daughter!" murmured the countess, enfolding her in her arms in a yearning embrace.

"Beloved princess!" "Darling sister!" whispered Josephine and Oriana simultaneously, encircling her with their arms.

She took them one by one to her bosom, and kissed their tremulous, loving faces. She held them off to gaze rapturously at them, then kissed them again.

"You are indeed like Edgar; and worthy of my own dear lord," she sighed, like a happy child.

She looked at each and all with a grave, sweet glance of gratitude.

"I thank you much, kind and generous family," she said, in her clear, dainty voice. "You have taken to your midst a friendless, sorrowful woman, who else would have perished utterly. I have instead of ruin found happiness and safety, and, better than all—love!"

She said this with such a radiant, upward look of gratitude into the summer heavens that all who caught it thrilled with a strange, sweet prescience of something holier than beauty which encompassed this princess as a garment of glory.

They followed her into her new home with the breathless gaze of awe.

"Am I not blessed, my dear lord?" smiled the bride, with her soft clasp again upon his arm.

He looked upon her with passionate affection—with an ineffable respect, too, and a half-wondering rapture, from which the delicate bloom would never be abraded.

"Who could resist your power, Frederica?" he fondly asked. "You are my wife, and my princess."

It is the evening after the arrival.

Who is this comes smiling up to Berney Wood, with her little head nestling on an old fellow's shoulder, in the obscurity of the deep family coach?

Why, I believe it's Fairy Bright Eyes, alias the Right Honourable the Viscountess Grantham. She's bringing her delighted spouse to present him to "that angel," Lady Berney.

She can't help feeling dreadfully shocked at her brother's death, which she didn't hear of till she returned from her trip abroad, but neither can she help burning with eagerness to welcome home the dear dead bishop's niece, and have a good cry with her over the bishop's sudden death.

How gratified the viscount looks, when after a summary of events, his wife suddenly throws her arms about his neck and informs him that he is, after all, the darlingest, dearest, most delicious old man who ever, ever breathed! After which my lady lets him lift her, with a passing hug of good-will, out of the carriage to the porch of the mansion, and they enter in.

Later yet.

Who is it walks under the lilacs behind the old towers, while the kindly stars send down a shower of benedictions?

'Tis the "brand which was plucked from the burning," and the patient man who has loved her so long. It is Mabel Fane and Wade.

"It's not crying you are, my girl, because I've told you this?" he is sadly asking her.

"No, no," she falters, shamefacedly. "It's long ago that I stopped loving him, poor, wicked soul; but to think he should die like that, with all his sins on his head! I cry at the wickedness of these men, and at the ill they did before they were called to their account. But their deaths can't bring back the dear bishop they murdered between 'em—the man that came out of a cloud to save me from destruction. I cry because I feel that if it wasn't for me the bishop would not have had such a cruel enemy. And now I'll see him nevermore."

Wade hushes the wailing cry with simple words of cheer, and whispers of his patient love.

"I thought you'd have grieved 'cos the poor gentleman wor murdered," ventures he; "and for your sake it was I went and nabbed the man as did it. I thinks to myself, she'd know by that I feels sorry like for her, and doesn't put the blame on the wrong back. I knows right well that you'd never a been a jilt if he'd a-let you be, Mabel. That's why I went and follered Jonson, my girl."

She looks at him with shy kindness; she is touched; she murmurs penitence for what he never blamed her; and she puts her hand in his, saying: "Don't fret any more; if you'll have me yet I'll be a good wife to you."

The "fervour and faith of his heart hath been shewn" to her and to those she loves most dearly—the bishop and his niece. For this she will love him to the end of her life.

Our story is told.

The bishop's debt has been fully paid. Frail he was, and much he had to answer for, but he was not found insolvent—all he had he offered.

He gave his life for his friend—more a man cannot do. The head that was outlawed on earth is crowned with immortality in heaven. And dear he will ever be, if not to thee, oh, reader, to those who knew him best—faithful Gretchen, brave Lord Berney, and the tender Princess Frederica.

THE END.

THE OLDEST TREE IN THE WORLD.—The Rev. J. I. Jones has been making a missionary tour in the interior of Ceylon. He visited Auradajapura, the city of residence and burial of the old Singhaless kings. One of the buildings there, called a Dagoba, was built 160 B.C. But the most interesting sight was the Bo-tree. "This," says Mr. Jones, "is the oldest tree in the world. It was planted in its present position before the coming of Christ, and still flourishes, bearing few marks of great age. It has been time after time banked up, and now occupies a place considerably above the level ground, being approached by several terraces. It is surrounded by an iron railing, and is guarded with great care, no one being permitted to break a branch, or even pluck a leaf."

THE WEIGHING OFFICE OF THE BANK OF ENGLAND.—The weighing office is one of the most interesting places in the bank. As its name imports, it is the office where the sovereigns are tested as to weight before being issued to the public. The very ingenious machinery is the invention of a late governor of the bank, William Cotton, Esq., and has been much approved by scientific men. By a very simple process the light sovereigns eliminate themselves from a mixed mass, a pair of balances being so arranged that the sovereigns of legitimate

weight pass uninterruptedly to their appointed receptacle on one side, while those which have become light by abrasion receive a slight touch, causing them to diverge to the other side. The light sovereigns are then slit by machinery closely resembling a sausage-cutter. This prevents the possibility of re-issue. Their destination is the melting pot and re-coining. By this machinery 35,000 sovereigns can be weighed in a day, and 200 can be defaced in a minute.

THE PEARLS OF ERIN;

OR,
THE HALF SISTERS.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE two men—Bassantyne and Lame Bill—faced each other; the one horrified, maddened, desperate, with a hunted expression in his black eyes; the other smiling, and glowing with sinister exultation.

It was a strange scene. The lonely, shaded dell of Connor Park, the sunlight drifting down between the leaves and branches in little dancing showers, the twitter of birds, the music of running water, and, so incongruous with these innocent sights and sounds, those two murderous faces glaring through the shadows at each other.

Slowly and stealthily, with the motion of a cat, the hand of Bassantyne crept to the breast-pocket in which were hidden his pistols.

As his hand came in contact with the cold, ivory-mounted weapons, he seemed to feel that he had not yet lost control of his future. His self-possession came back to him. He remembered that he had not yet betrayed his identity to his enemy, and he began to think it possible that he might yet carry matters with a high hand, and put to rout Lame Bill's suspicions.

The reflection brought with it a thrill of hope. The colour came back to his sallow cheeks, and he assumed a haughty, supercilious manner, such as he deemed appropriate to the lord of Connor Hall.

"Stand back, fellow!" he ejaculated, hoarsely and menacingly. "How dare you intrude like this into private grounds? This is no place for footpads, as you will find to your cost!"

This address, and the domineering air with which it was delivered, after the recent evident panic of Bassantyne, was like a blow in the face to the intruder. He gave a great gasp of astonishment, and opened his small eyes to their widest extent, while an expression of utter bewilderment convulsed his visage.

Then he forced a hoarse laugh and exclaimed: "Ha, ha! Pretty well done, Gentleman Bob! You always was good at acting, but this here is good enough for Theatyr Royal!"

"Gentleman Bob!" repeated Bassantyne, hoarsely. "What do you mean, fellow? But it is evident what you mean. Leave my grounds, thief, or I will have you scourged from them!"

Lame Bill crept a few paces nearer, his keen eyes fixed in puzzled scrutiny upon the dark and sinister face of Lady Kathleen's husband.

"Your grounds!" he sneered. "You needn't put on none of your airs to me, Gentleman Bob. All your big talk don't impose on me. I didn't pass so long a time with you out in Australia for nothing. No crinkly beard can deceive me. Your disguise ain't deep enough."

"Scoundrel! Do you know to whom you are talking? I am Nicol Bassantyne, the husband of Lady Kathleen Connor."

"Of Ballyconnor, and so on! I know all that. I know too that you are my old pal, Gentleman Bob, and that I can make my fortune a-giving on you up. You've been everything by turns, Gentleman Bob, count, lord, gentleman of leisure, gambler, forger, thief, convict, and fugitive! Fugitive you are now, although you have fooled one of the noblest ladies in Ireland to make a runaway match with you! There will be a fine come-down to the pride of my lady when the beaks lag you. You've been keen to get yourself into this fine nest, but when you come to find yourself in a prison the change will be too great to be agreeable!"

The expression of Bassantyne's face changed slightly, yet enough to be perceptible to his enemy. "That shot told!" observed Lame Bill, with a gleam of satisfaction in his sullen eyes. "You won't go on to deny that you are my old pal, Gentleman Bob, will you?"

"I will no longer parley words with you, wretch. Begone!" cried Bassantyne, threateningly.

"Not yet! I called here to inquire after your vally, Newville, or Murple, or whatever he calls himself this year. He hasn't got home yet, I understand?"

Bassantyne was nearly choking with rage and fury. He longed to throttle the impudent wretch who dared

to linger in his grounds when he had bidden him begone. Yet there was a dangerous fascination in Lame Bill's presence, and he desired to prolong the interview until his enemy should be dispossessed of the conviction of his identity with "Gentleman Bob." He forced himself to say, calmly:

"My valet! I discharged him in Dublin. He was an impudent fellow, whom I had had in my service but a few weeks, and whom I did not care to bring down to Ballyconnor. If you want him, you will probably find him in Dublin."

"A bird in the hand is worth two in the bush," said Lame Bill. "I don't care so much about the vally now. Excuse the annoyance I've caused you, Mr. Bassantyne. Good morning."

He raised his worn hat in a mocking bow and sidled away, as if bent on instant retreat.

Bassantyne took the alarm.

"Stay," he said, in a conciliatory tone. "It is evident, my good fellow, that you have mistaken me for some one else. These resemblances are frequent, and merely accidental—"

"Oh, yes," said Lame Bill. "Merely accidental, of course. Excuse my impudence, sir. Good morning."

Again he made a movement to depart.

Bassantyne's alarm increased. The man's apologies and haste to get away were more menacing than the loudest threats. He believed all his blustering to have been of no effect. Evidently the man knew him beyond the shadow of a doubt.

Then a sickening sensation assailed Bassantyne's heart. How long had Lame Bill been hidden in the shadows surrounding the little dell? Had he been there during the interview with Lady Kathleen? Had he studied Bassantyne's features when the latter was alone and unguarded? Was all this disguise of beard and stained complexion, changed name and high position, but the merest dimly veil to this ancient enemy, and had he already looked beneath them and seen under them all his old comrade and fellow-convict? It must be so.

The cold sweat started on Bassantyne's dark forehead. A convulsive trembling seized him.

"Don't be in such a hurry, my good man," he said, in a husky voice. "There's no harm done by your singular conduct. I took you for a footpad at first, but your abrupt appearance will account for that. No doubt you are a worthy fellow. But about my valet. Were you about to apply for his situation?"

Lame Bill grinned.

"Well, no," he said. "I have no call to be vally. My talent lies in the way of being master. I've got my eye on a prize that's offered for reward for the recovery of a great criminal—the one I took you for, begging your pardon, Mr. Bassantyne—and if I should get that, or them—for there's two men wanted, and two rewards—I should be a rich man."

"Yes; but you might make more by holding your tongue," suggested Bassantyne, cautiously.

A quick gleam lit up the eyes of Lame Bill. A scheming look appeared on his face. Appealed to in his weak point, his desire for gain, even his revengefulness sank into the background. Greed first, revenge afterwards, was his motto. He never allowed his personal feelings to stand in the way of his making money.

"If you've got anything to say," he exclaimed, abruptly, "we won't beat around the bush. You know you are Gentleman Bob, and I know it! I've been looking out of the shade here at you until I knew you beyond the shadow of a doubt. If you want to play off, you will deceive no one but yourself. If you come out liberally, we may come to an understanding."

Bassantyne's face paled to a sickly yellow. He looked about him with glaring eyes.

"You are alone?" he said.

"This time, yes. Yet not alone, for I am armed."

"Well, what will you take to keep silent?"

A swift glow reddened Lame Bill's face. A swift gleam shot into his eyes.

"You own it, then?" he demanded.

"I own nothing in so many words," said Bassantyne, doggedly. "I merely ask, what is your price?"

Lame Bill reflected, sending sidelong glances around him, into the park, and at the burly figure of his enemy. Evidently he was estimating Bassantyne's resources.

"Let me see," he mused. "You are a rich man, the husband of an heiress. Her ladyship loves you to distraction, or she would never have eloped to Scotland with you. Romantic, proud as Lucifer, high-bred and dainty, she would sacrifice all she has rather than to live under the shadow of a terrible disgrace. The reward offered by Government and the Colonial authorities for your capture is three thousand pounds. I bear you no love, Gentleman Bob, and my revenge is worth at least as much more. To forego it, I should want at least three thousand pounds. Then, by way of premium, and so on—well, we will

call the whole amount ten thousand pounds. Give me that sum down, and a thousand a year, and I'll be as dumb as the eel on the Lord Lieutenant's tomb."

"Ten thousand pounds! Are you crazy?"

"By no means. If you haven't got it yourself, your romantic and ardent young bride will give it to you. Not a penny less, Gentleman Bob. If you don't like my offer, you needn't accept it."

A dangerous glitter shone in Bassantyne's eyes. "I haven't got the money," he said. "I can't get it. You will have to moderate your demands—"

"Not a farthing! A man will give a good deal rather than give up such splendour as this," and again Lame Bill glanced around him. "A real park, an old mansion, horses and carriages, servants and, best of all, a fine lady bride, are not to be lightly thrown away. A man won't swing for the sake of saving a few pounds to his wife. That brings me to the point. You must pay my demands, or swing."

His face was momentarily averted from his enemy. Watching his chance, Bassantyne sprang upon him with the leap of a tiger, uttering a hoarse cry of rage. Taken unawares, Lame Bill had not time to draw a weapon. He struck out blindly with his hands, fighting for dear life.

A quick, sharp struggle between the two succeeded. Bassantyne was heavy, burly, and powerful. He had the strength of a giant in his brawny arms. The other, albeit lame, was as quick and supple as a panther. He knew where, when his first panic was over, to plant his blows to make them effective, and he had a way of using his bullet head as a battering-ram—a mode of fighting which, with the merit of novelty, was also as effective as his blows.

For a little while only the hoarse breathing and muttered curses of the two men were heard in the little glade. But at last the conflict drew near its end, the superior strength of Bassantyne giving him the upper hand.

"You will betray me, will you?" he muttered, hoarsely. "Well! see! Let this settle our outstanding account, my friend!"

With the mocking sneer, he dealt his enemy a blow upon the temple that felled him to the ground.

The man fell, limp and lifeless. His face, bruised and swollen, was stained with blood. His eyelids drooped to his cheeks. His arms fell to his sides. Bassantyne stooped over him, and lifted one of his arms, letting it fall. It dropped a dead weight.

Bassantyne's cheeks began to flush. He raised the battered, swollen head, and placed his hand upon the man's breast to feel if his heart still beat.

"He's dead!" Bassantyne muttered, excitedly, arising to his feet. "Well, that danger's over. You got more than the ten thousand pounds you asked for, Lame Bill! If you could have foreseen this you might not have been so bold in your demands!"

He listened, with the quick start of guilt, for some sound of approaching steps. But all that he heard was the music of the birds, the rustle of the wind through the leaves, the murmur of waters.

He breathed more freely.

"Dead!" he said to himself, spurning the body with his foot. "That danger is disposed of. Now how to meet this one? What am I to do with his body?"

There was a deep pool of water on the estate, but it was half a mile distant. It would not be possible to drag the body to it in broad daylight without meeting some labourer, who would give the alarm. But with the body once dropped into the depths of Black Pool, Bassantyne could feel sure that the secret of his crime was safely buried for ever.

"I must take it there," he thought, agitatedly. "But how? There are men working in the vicinity now, trimming the trees. I must wait till night. Meanwhile, I will hide the body in some safe spot, where it can remain till night!"

He set about his search for a safe hiding-place, yet not daring to venture far from the little dell where the ghastly object he meant to hide was lying, with swollen face upturned to the shower of sunlight.

Presently he found what he sought—a little hollow, shut in and completely shadowed and darkened by a clump of thick-growing firs. It was a covert for rabbits, or rather game, and the dead leaves heaped within it that had been blown from various quarters showed that the park-keeper seldom peered into its recesses.

"The very spot!" muttered Bassantyne. "I will hide the body here till night, and then I will sink it in the Black Pool!"

He hastened to drag the inert figure to the little hollow, and flung it in, arranging the branches of the trees to hide the body.

Then he sought to obliterate the traces of the recent conflict in the little glade, which effort was partially successful.

His task completed, he hurried from the glade,

wandering restlessly through the park until he had grown composed, paying an apparently idle visit to the Black Pool, and at last sauntering back to the Hall.

During the remainder of the day he was uneasy and restless. He took a ride on his spirited hunter, but somehow the gaze of men was not so pleasant as usual to-day. At every curious glance he trembled, fancying that there might be some blood-stain upon him he had overlooked, or some token of that conflict which had resulted so disastrously to his enemy. There were a few scratches and bruises upon him. These he magnified into gaping wounds, and finally, trembling and terrified, he returned to the Hall.

He spent an hour or so in his smoking-room. He took a bath, and dressed himself carefully in a new suit ordered from Dublin, and when dinner bell rang, he descended to the drawing-room scrupulously dressed, yet pale, worn, and haggard.

Lady Kathleen was already in the drawing-room, and the ill-assorted pair descended to the dining-room together.

There was an atmosphere of guilt about Bassantyne, fresh from his crime, that the pure instincts of Lady Kathleen detected, but could not understand. She shrank from all contact with him, and the meal was eaten in silence. It is worthy of remark that Bassantyne, despite his perturbation, ate a hearty repast.

In truth, he was sufficiently familiar with crime, and hardened by that familiarity, to feel a keen sense of relief at the turn affairs had taken. Lame Bill removed for ever from his path, what had he to fear? Nothing—except, perhaps, the treachery of Murple. He would meet his dangers one at a time, he thought, and conquer them all.

After dinner, he went out into the garden to resume his smoking, and later he went into the house, and to his own room.

"I must do nothing to excite suspicion," he thought. "Old Delaney has eyes like a hawk, and has set himself to watching me, I can see I must not stir out until the house is silent for the night! I must be cautious—very cautious!"

The hours crept on. The sounds died out of the house. It was growing late.

Bassantyne proceeded to change his light garments for old and dark ones. Then he extinguished his light and looked out.

The night was suitable for his purpose, being moonless and gloomy, yet not intensely dark. He could trace the objects on the lawn distinctly—the marble urns, a winged Mercury on a pedestal, and a rose hedge.

He waited until the great house clock had rung out the hour of midnight.

Then he put on a pair of list slippers and quitted his room, locking the door behind him.

All was still in the house. The servants had retired, and the hall lights were extinguished.

He crept down the grand staircase like a burglar, listening, and coming to a halt now and then in a panic, fancying he heard the steps of Delaney, the steward. But no interruption occurred to his movements. He gained the front door, and softly undid its bolts and bars and complicated fastenings, and opened the door and crept out into the porch.

Then he glided down the steps and hurried into the shadow of the rose hedge.

But, fancying that hostile eyes might be looking out at him from the windows of the old Hall, he moved fleetly in the shadow until he had gained the edge of the park.

"Now I am safe!" he said, to himself. "No one has seen me. No one will come out to watch me. I have only to carry that thing to Black Pool, fill its pockets with stones, and sink it. Then I shall be indeed safe!"

He moved swiftly along the lonely paths in the depths of the park, making for the hollow where he had concealed the body of Lame Bill.

He reached it and knelt down in the shade of the spreading firs, and groped in the hollow with his hands.

The hollow was empty!

Horrid and frightened, Bassantyne drew out his match-case and struck a light. There was a pine cone on the ground at his elbow. He lighted this and flung it into the hollow.

The body was indeed gone!

Bassantyne uttered an ejaculation of horror and terror.

"Gone!" he whispered, incredulously. "Gone! And where?"

With the red light of the burning cone playing on his haggard, convulsed visage, he searched the hollow for some token of the cause of Lame Bill's disappearance.

Presently he uttered a hoarse cry.

He had detected footprints, not his own, by the

side of the hollow—footprints which he knew must have been made by his enemy.

"He was not dead, then," he cried. "I had only stunned him! He has fled to bring the officers here. How many hours has he been gone? Curse him! Why did I not make sure of him? Fool that I am! I deserve my ruin!"

For a moment he knelt there with the face of a demon. Then he rose up, whispering to himself:

"It's all up! I must see Kathleen at once! If I sink, she sinks with me!"

With glaring eyes and desperate soul he hurried through the park to the Hall.

CHAPTER XXIV.

For hours the young Lady Nora Kildare slept on in the little swift-sailing sloop, under the night sky, her small head drooped low on her bosom; and for hours her fellow-voyager, Fogarty, sat at the tiller, watching her, and debating the fearful problem of what he should do with her.

On the one hand was the reward offered him by Michael Kildare for his ward's destruction—a trivial reward, and considered only because behind it lay the threat of a betrayal into the hands of the law. On the other hand were riches and safety, Fogarty thought, with advantages and pleasures innumerable.

Long before Lady Nora awoke Fogarty had decided that she should live, and live for his benefit.

"I'm out of the lawyer's reach here," he mused. "I can hide where he can never find me. I have found a mine of wealth, and I shall be a fool not to work it. Why should I play into Michael Kildare's hands when my own pockets are empty?"

With these thoughts came projects of gaining wealth for himself out of the coffers which he supposed might, after all, belong to Lady Nora.

"My days as a valet are over!" he thought, exultantly. "Bassantyne will find that I am as clever as he. He managed, by some legerdemain, to induce an heiress to elope with him. I shall get money, and not be tied down to the whims of any fine lady!"

The morning broke at last over the waters—a dull, gloomy, sunless morning, with a firm breeze.

The little sloop was heading her way gallantly to the north, and making fair progress. Fogarty was content, and ate his breakfast, which he procured from the basket, with a good appetite. He had no conscience to interfere with his digestion.

An hour or so later Lady Nora awakened. She aroused herself with a start, and looked around her with a frightened gaze.

"Oh, I had forgotten I was on my way to England," she said, as the colour slowly tinged her pale cheeks. "I fancied myself still at my prison at Yew Cottage. How glorious this free, strong air is! We are out of sight of land?"

She stood up and surveyed the waters on every side with dilated eyes.

"Yes, my lady," returned Fogarty. "We're bowling along at eight knots an hour, as near as I can make out. The wind is shift. We'll do better when it settles."

"But there is no sun," said Lady Nora, looking up at the dun clouds. "How can you tell our course? Have you a compass?"

"No, my lady," answered the pretended sailer. "But I can tell our course by the wind. During the night I told it by the stars. We're all right, my lady. Tim Fogarty knows this 'ere Channel as well as he knows the way to his mouth."

Lady Nora was reassured, yet for a long time she looked thoughtfully at both sea and sky. At last she asked:

"Ought we not to get to Liverpool by noon, Mr. Fogarty?"

"With this wind, my lady?" asked Fogarty, in apparent astonishment. "It's well we'll be doing if we get there by sunset. But it's not for Liverpool I'm making! Mr. Kildare, when he discovers our flight, my lady, may send by the steamer, or telegraph to Liverpool and Holyhead to intercept you. So it would be better to put into some small bay on the English coast near Southport, and you can take the train to Manchester from Southport."

Lady Nora's face brightened.

"You are very thoughtful, Mr. Fogarty!" she exclaimed. "You shall be well rewarded for all your kindness to me, if I have to sell my jewellery to repay you. I am poor, you know; but if ever I should be rich I shall know how to reward your goodness."

"It's not helping you for money I am!" said Fogarty, hypocritically. "It's out of pity. It's not in a sailor's heart to look on calmly and see an innocent girl persecuted. But eat your breakfast, my lady. This air makes sharp appetites!"

Lady Nora, weakened by her meagre prison fare, felt the need of complying with this suggestion. She got out the provision basket, and took from it a slice

of bread and piece of cold meat, these being the chief edibles it afforded. There was a large can of fresh water, which had been placed in the half-cabin by the owner of the sloop, and to this can was attached a rusty tin cup. Lady Nora moistened her meagre breakfast with the water, and both food and drink had a delicious taste to her which pretentious feasts had formerly sometimes lacked.

Her breakfast over, she resumed her seat and the contemplation of the heaving, white-capped waters.

As the morning deepened the clouds lifted. At noon the sun showed itself, and the chill October air had a tinge of warmth imparted to it. The young girl ceased to shiver under her wrappings.

"Are you sure we are going in the right direction, Mr. Fogarty?" asked Lady Nora, at length, when the sun had begun to descend the afternoon sky. "We do not seem to be going east!"

"We are all right, my lady," said Fogarty. "I shall tack presently. It's on the tack I am now. I've been wondering, my lady," he added, "why Mr. Kildare should have treated you so ill. It's not altogether to make you marry a nobleman, I'm thinking."

"No, that was not all he shut me up for," said the young heiress. "I happened to overhear a conversation in which he took part, the last evening of my stay at his house, and the discoveries I then made and the revelations I overheard were full of danger to him. He discovered my presence in the adjoining room, and that very night brought me to Yew Cottage, informing me that I should never be released until I agreed to marry Lord Kildare! A promise to do so would alone give him safety, after what I had overheard!"

"What was it you overheard, my lady?" asked Fogarty, with pretended indifference.

"That I cannot tell you, Mr. Fogarty. I can tell it to no one until I have seen my principal guardian, Sir Russell Ryan."

Fogarty looked chagrined.

He had expected to find it an easy matter to induce Lady Nora to tell him all she knew concerning her kinsman; but something now in the grave, sweet face and lovely, resolute mouth told him that she was not one to open her heart to every one. Not even the supposed service he had rendered her, and was rendering her, could induce her to make him her confidant.

"If you was to tell me, I might help you," he suggested.

"The only help I need is in getting to England," said Lady Nora, with a bright, warm smile. "You are rendering me the only and the greatest service now that you can, Mr. Fogarty. Once on English soil, I can take care of myself. Once with Sir Russell, he will take care of me."

"So you won't tell me?" said Fogarty, a little sullenly.

The young heiress opened her sunny eyes more widely. Such pertinacity was as singular as it was disagreeable.

"I cannot tell you," she said, gravely.

Fogarty scowled, but was silent. The change in his looks impressed the young girl, but she also was silent. Presently the man spoke again.

"I heard Mr. Kildare say, as he went down the stairs at Yew Cottage to-day night, that you 'knew too much.' How did you know too much, my lady? You have got track of some secret of his, the disclosure of which will injure his reputation?"

"I cannot answer your questions now, my friend," returned Lady Nora. "My confidence is due, first of all, to my guardian."

Fogarty scowled again. The rôle of virtue was becoming irksome to him. He was a reckless, bad-hearted fellow at best, and was capable of few good deeds, except when such deeds were likely to prove profitable. He began to think now that a disclosure of the facts in the case, and of her helplessness, might make his girl passenger more confidential.

"She's got to tell me the whole story," he thought. "As she won't tell me out of friendship, she must out of fear. I know I can terrify her into a complete revelation."

He studied how to tell her the truth, how to reveal to her his true character.

While he was thus engaged, the young girl was studying him. The fact that there was something strange about this pretended sailor was just forcing itself upon her attention.

"I didn't tell you that I knew Mr. Kildare personally, did I?" asked Fogarty. "Did I mention to you that I had a long interview with him 'to-day night' in my mother's parlour?"

The young heiress started. She replied in the negative.

"It's so," said Fogarty, smiling sullenly. "You never heard of me, you said. My past is nothing to boast on, and Kildare knows it. He knows, too, that I am wanted out in the colony. You see, I had an

engagement to stay there for a certain number of years, and I broke the engagement and came home. Kildare knew that too."

The girl did not understand. She continued to regard him with grave, innocent eyes, sweet and fearless, vaguely conscious only that there was something wrong.

"Well, you broke your engagement?" she said, a little impatiently.

"Yes, I broke it!" exclaimed Fogarty, laughing boisterously. "It's against the law to break an engagement of that sort. Kildare knew he had the whip-hand, so he tried to make me do his dirty work. He had a ward, said he, that 'knew too much.' He said he wanted a bold fellow to dispose of her."

"How?" said L. "Here's your plan," said he, "and you're the man to do it." With that he said as how his ward is as innocent as a baby, having been brought up in the country. It would be easy to get rid of her; twenty pounds to the man that sinks her in St. George's Channel."

Young Lady Nora leaned forward, breathless, eager, panting. Her sunny eyes shone like stars from out of the whiteness of her face.

"He wanted to kill me!" she ejaculated. "Oh, Mr. Fogarty! You are not deceiving me? He really offered you money to drown me?"

"He really did. Twenty pounds, and to go scot free. If I didn't do it, a betrayal to the police on account of my past offences."

"He wanted to kill me!" repeated the girl, in a piteous voice. "Oh, Heaven! and I have loved him so! The discovery of all his baseness and treachery wounds me to the soul. Oh, Michael! Michael!"

Her voice broke down in a wild, wailing sob.

"What did he say when you refused to fall in with his plans?" asked Lady Nora, a little later, when she had grown calm again.

"I didn't refuse, my lady."

"Ah! You pretended to consider them. Your words gave me such a start then, Mr. Fogarty! You made Michael think you would kill me?"

"Yes, my lady."

"How—how was it to be done?"

"I was to wait twenty-four hours, till last night, my lady, and then I was to go to your room. No—I am getting ahead of my story. Mr. Kildare was to send me a disguise yesterday morning—a suit of sailor's garments, so that I could pretend to you that I am a sailor—"

"But you are a sailor, are you not, Mr. Fogarty?"

"No, my lady."

The young girl looked at her companion with two terrible eyes. They seemed to be burning, and they were opened to their widest extent, giving them a wild look.

"Not a sailor?"

"No, my lady. The character is put on with the clothes."

There was a long silence. Lady Nora covered her face with her hands. At last she spoke again.

"Go on," she said, in a strange voice.

"Yes, my lady. Mr. Kildare said that I must steal the key to your room, and not let my mother know of your intended escape. He did not want her to know his plans. He's a cautious man is Mr. Kildare. He said I was to open the door and go in and offer to rescue you out of pity. He said you would be sure to fly with me. Then I was to take you to the sea-coast, where I was to have a boat hired and in readiness."

"This boat is hired, then? It is not your own?"

"No, it's not mine. I hired it yesterday of the man we found on board last night. Mr. Kildare gave me the money to pay him."

"Ah! What else?"

"On reaching the boat we were to go on board, and set sail ostensibly for England—"

"We are not headed for England, then?" said Lady Nora, still in that strange voice.

"No. Mr. Kildare said you would be wearied and worn, and would soon fall asleep. While you were asleep, I was to toss you overboard. I was then to return to Dublin and keep silence, while he would make loud inquiries after you, and loud lamentations about your unknown fate!"

The terrible gloom on the girl's fair brow lifted. Into her despairing, horrified eyes crept a quick gleam of light. A heavenly smile gathered about her lovely mouth.

"You rescued me, as he ordered," she said; "you took me to sea in a boat—I fell asleep—and you did not drown me! You have let me live. You have even betrayed me to me all the plans of your would-be employer! Oh, Mr. Fogarty, I dared to doubt you while you were telling me this story! I feared, dreaded, and despaired! But you pretended to obey Michael Kildare only that you might save me! You knew that he would find some other way to destroy me if you utterly refused to do his bidding! While pretending to carry out his villainous schemes, you

are befriending me and taking me to my guardian!"

She drew near to him in a glow of gratitude, and raising one of his hairy, dirty hands from the tiller, she clasped it in both her own dainty pink palms, pressing it fervently.

Fogarty drew his hand away with some confusion. "I'm not so good as you think," he said, roughly. "I don't mean to kill you, my lady. But I'm a poor man, and I can't afford to lose by you. I want to make my fortune out of you."

The girl retreated a few paces.

"I am poor and friendless," she said. "My jewels are in Michael Kildare's house. They are valuable, but they are beyond my reach."

"Just so!" said Fogarty, coolly. "You've got no money?"

"Only a little in my pocket."

"You've got a rich lover, maybe?"

"No," replied Lady Nora, her face as pale as the dead. "My lover is poor—poorer than I, because he is in debt."

"Sir Russell Ryan is rich, perhaps?"

"No, and he has a large family dependent on him. He has nothing to spend on me."

"Then there's only one way you can pay me for letting you live. You must tell me this secret of Michael Kildare's. He has got money, and I will get a share of it by trading on his secret."

"If I tell you?"

"You may live."

"Will you take me to England?"

"Yes. I will land you at Southampton."

The girl hastened, spurred on by her terrible fears, to tell her enemy of the secrets she had learned—how, when she was hidden in the little alcove of Michael Kildare's library, he had come in with Redmond Lord Kildare—how the two had talked, and how the lawyer had told the new earl that he knew of a flaw in the claims of the latter, by virtue of which the earldom and estates might be wrested from him and restored to Lady Nora.

"What is that flaw?" demanded Fogarty.

"I don't know. But my guardian, Sir Russell Ryan, will use every exertion to discover it and to restore to me my rights!"

"Hum! Your knowledge can only benefit you and not me," said Fogarty. "The secret don't amount to much, after all, to an outsider. Michael Kildare would laugh in my face if I went to him trying to borrow money on the ground of a flaw in Lord Kildare's claims. 'What's Lord Kildare to me?' he would ask. 'And if there's a flaw, and it—prove it! Is this all the secret there is?'"

"Yes, it is all!"

"That lawyer didn't mean to kill you for overhearing that! He's got other reasons. Or else there's something behind all this I can't understand. But, my lady, I can't take you to England!"

"Not take me to England? You promised—"

"What's a promise? A breath of air. I am not such a fool as to let loose a witness who could set upon me the hounds of the law! Besides, I have other plans. I can make more money by keeping you in my possession. Michael Kildare, so long as he knows you are alive and in my keeping, will be under my thumb! Your secret is not merchantable, but you are, my lady! I may make a big thing out of this business by simply keeping you my prisoner. And I will do it!"

He set his lips together firmly. Lady Nora's heart—brave though it was—sank to the depths of an awful despair!

(To be continued.)

We regret to hear that the second of the English Atlantic Cables is broken. It is supposed that the vessel sent out to fish up the 1866 cable previously injured has hooked the second one, and so caused the accident. Communication with America is now carried on solely by the French cable; but it is hoped that at least one of the English cables will be repaired before winter finally sets in.

It is said that Napoleon III. is now treating for the purchase of the island of Laoroma, near Ragusa. This lovely spot would make a pleasant residence for the ex-Emperor if it had not been formerly inhabited by the unfortunate Emperor Maximilian of Mexico. If the purchase is completed Napoleon will be the third sovereign dethroned by Prussia who has found a refuge in Austria, the others being the King of Hanover and the Elector of Hesse. Besides these there are now residing in the empire the King of Naples and his wife, and the pretenders Prince Wassa and Count Chambord. Should the Pope, as is stated in some reports, eventually settle at Innsprück, and Queen Isabella pass her exile in the neighbourhood of her former subject, the ex-Empress of the French, Austria will be the refuge of all the dispossessed sovereigns of Europe.



[THE KING-ELECT OF SPAIN.]

PRINCE AMADEUS OF ITALY.

ONCE more the truth of the well-known proverb which tells how the quarrels of rogues tend to the advantage of honest men has been proved by recent events. For more than two years the beautiful country of Spain, once the arbiter of Europe and the leader of civilisation, has been subjected to all the harassments that attend upon a provisional government, and all the evils that wait upon uncertainty, because none of her powerful neighbours and friends would allow her to manage her own affairs. Now, when their jealousies have brought them into a strife so deadly that each combatant, no matter which be victor, is rendered impotent to interfere in the affairs of other nations, Spain—conscious of the fact that for the next half-century France and Prussia will have to sit like beaten dogs in opposite corners, licking their wounds—quietly solves the problem of her future by electing as her monarch the prince to whom her thoughts turned instinctively in the first moments of her freedom.

Not only do France and Prussia, by their horrible antipathy to each other, and their abominable and infamous conflict, lose the chance of interfering with the movements of Spain, but they actually transfer to other hands the championship of Europe, for which they have been really contending. Rejuvenated Italy and emancipated Spain, bound together as they are by the fact of their almost simultaneous delivery from the thralldom of centuries, tied as they are by the strong bonds of religious sympathy, and connected as they are by dynastic relationships, can hardly fail to become close and firm allies. Italy, persevering as she has been for years in the work of self-purification, shines almost transfigured in her adherence to the noblest and highest of national aims; and Spain, by her patience under the terrible trials of the last few years, no less than by her ready appreciation of the opportunity just afforded her, shows that the bitter lessons of ad-

versity have had their sweet effect upon her. The power of consolidated Italy, backed by the alliance of resuscitated Spain, can defy all the brutality of Germany and all the braggadocio of France, should fate force fight upon her; and it is more than possible that the world may once more see the mistress of humanity enthroned in Rome. Not in the old Imperial Rome, with its abominable earth-hunger and lust of conquest—not in the haughty Papal Rome, with its chains of superstition wound round the very souls of men—but in the newly won capital of Constitutional Italy, where the bright spirit of republican freedom bows itself in deference to the necessity of order, and achieves a wider liberty by means of the sacrifice it makes of theoretical equality—here, in this newer, purer, better Rome, is the worthier example for an enlightened world, and here the beautiful foreshadowing of a nobler rule, than ever Rome bore yet.

Fit companion for Italy on the bright path of progress is the beautiful country of Spain. Ages of bondage and centuries of disunion have proved incapable of destroying the patriotism of her people. All the vices that follow the most degraded forms of royalty, all the miseries that come in the train of perverted luxury, and all the unnumbered horrors that accumulate under the soul-corrupting influence of priestly rule, have still left, despite themselves, life and vigour in the nation that conquered half the old world, then added a new one to its territories. There is not a politician in all Europe who does not see, in the vigour which ambition, vice, and superstition have alike proved unable to eradicate, the sign of hope and the token of ultimate prosperity for Spain.

The trials through which Spain has passed on her path to liberty have been of no common order. Enslaved for centuries by the Mohammedan empire of Morocco, and torn by internal disunion, she had scarcely achieved the very semblance of freedom and unity before she fell into the still more destructive power of the priesthood. The peculiar idiosyn-

crasies of the people, the fact that the long warfare against the Moors necessarily assumed a religious character, and the bigotry of the national dynasty, all conspired to hand Spain over bound hand and foot to that priestly domination which never fails to sap the energies of the unfortunate country that may come under its influence.

It is to be readily believed that Spain has made a wise choice in her election of a new monarch. She has at any rate chosen a young prince of kindred blood and religion and a member of a family that has ever struggled for freedom, even when freedom meant personal ruin. Her new king, Prince Amadeus Ferdinand Marie, Duke of Aosta, is the second son of the King of Italy; and, if he emulate the public spirit, courage, and independence that distinguish his royal father, the day of his accession will be the precursor of a period of greater happiness and prosperity than Spain has ever known.

Prince Amadeus was born on the 30th of May, 1845, a few years only before his grandfather, Charles Albert, King of Sardinia, entered upon that struggle with Austrian despotism which cost him his crown. After the fatal battle of Novara, fought on the 23rd of March, 1849, the unfortunate Charles Albert, who had vainly sought death in that disastrous conflict, had, in order to preserve the semblance of independence for his kingdom, to abdicate his throne in favour of his son, Victor Emmanuel. How well and patiently the latter bore the trying conditions heaped upon him by the Austrians every one knows. He occupied himself incessantly with the improvement of his subjects; he won the powerful friendship of England and France by his ready alliance and practical utility at the time of the Crimean War, and when the opportunity came that made him King of Italy he bore his honours with a moderation equal to his dignity and patience under defeat. His character is said to be disfigured by private vices, and, if true, this fact is most earnestly to be deplored; but the bravery, simplicity, and generosity that have won him the title of King Honest-man (Galantuomo) from his own subjects make the acceptance of the throne by his son a bright omen for the future of Spain. One fact in illustration of the self-denial and public spirit of the King of Italy will show the character of the school in which his son has been trained. In 1866, when the financial difficulties of Italy were at a crisis which ultimately compelled the secularisation of Church property, the king, whose income had not been settled on too liberal a scale, himself advocated its reduction, and generously gave up no less than four millions to relieve the necessities of the country.

The future King of Spain married, on the 30th of May, 1867, his own twenty-second birthday, the Princess Marie of Della Cisterna, who was born on the 9th of August, 1847. They have an infant son, Emmanuel, born on the 19th of January, 1869. The election of the prince to the Spanish throne was made in great order by a considerable majority of the Cortes, and the result was accepted with much general rejoicing. The squadron charged to formally offer the crown to the prince was received with a hearty welcome in Italy, and the acceptance of the throne of Spain by Amadeus the First will probably be publicly promulgated before these lines reach our readers.

It is proposed to issue the new Glengarry forage cap and Norfolk jacket to the three regiments of Foot Guards in April next.

In the United States just now there are 27 young women studying theology, with a view to becoming preachers; 19 are studying law, and 67 are studying medicine.

PIGEONS bid fair to whip the world in postal despatch. We are now asked to believe that each pigeon will take 35,000 despatches of twenty words each on his leg—value in postage, 14,000.

A new helmet for officers serving in India has been decided on. The material will be cork, instead of wickerwork. Those worn by officers of the staff, cavalry, and artillery will have a spike at the top, and a gilt chain; those for infantry officers will have a plain button on the top, and a leather chin-strap.

WHEN the Russian American telegraph is completed the following feat will be possible. A telegram from Alaska for New York, leaving Sitka, say at 6.40 on Monday morning, would be received at Nicolae, Siberia, at six minutes past 1 on Tuesday morning; at St. Petersburg, Russia, at three minutes past six on Monday evening; at London, 22 minutes past 4 on Monday afternoon; and at New York at 46 minutes past 11 forenoon. Thus, allowing 20 minutes for each re-transmission, a message may start on the morning of one day to be received and transmitted the next day, again received and sent on the afternoon of the day it starts, and finally reaches its destination on the forenoon of the first day, the whole taking place in one hour's time.



[IS THAT ENGLAND?]

THE LOST HEIRESS OF LATYMER.

CHAPTER III.

Nay, start not; *Shakespeare.*
We may be friends an thou wilt.

At the time when the fair Victorine Hatton is introduced to the reader she had been scarcely a month in England.

Some few weeks previous to the day of the duel at Hacker's tavern—an important day in this history—a small vessel was crossing the English channel, leaving the coast of Normandy behind. It was late in the evening ere the cliffs of England came in sight; but as the sun was setting, its bold shores were visible, rising like a bank of dark clouds above the sea.

About the vessel itself there was something which deserves a passing notice. For the period she was a marvel of grace and beauty, and was considered a perfect model of marine architecture. Report said that the "Marquise" was originally built for a pleasure yacht by order of a great prince; certain it was that she still belonged to persons in some way connected with the French court, and that her voyages were made in the interests of a particular party, which had its head-quarters on the Continent.

To disguise the clandestine character of her trips, an English master was put in charge, and the "Marquise," Captain Redmond, regularly entered as a coaster. A few passengers were carried on the voyages; and on this particular day the little craft was bearing to England several persons who have already been introduced to the reader.

Although the wind was fair during the afternoon, Captain Redmond seemed in no particular hurry, and, with scanty sail set, was content to see the "Marquise" roll lazily through the waves.

It was getting dusk when Captain Redmond made out the line of Beachy Head, and walked aft to give some order to the helmsman; but he found his trusty mate there—an old sailor, who was left to himself so far as the sailing of the ship was concerned—and turned back to his former station.

At that time one of his passengers, one who had not shown himself while daylight lasted, came on deck, and after a careful survey around, went up to the master. He was a man of large frame and robust appearance, but now muffled up to his eyes, and wrapped in a heavy military cloak, as if he feared the least breath of air. Save the prominent nose, which protruded from beneath a hat pulled over the forehead, Captain Redmond could see

nothing but muffers and wrappers made up into the form of a man—a man of large proportions, but whose back was bent either by age or infirmities.

"So we are close upon the English shores, Master Redmond," the passenger began, in a harsh, falsetto voice. "At what hour, pray, will you bring us to land?"

"Not to-night, at least, sir."

"Not to-night? Why not to-night, Master Redmond, when Beachy Head is on our right?"

The captain looked at him closely ere he replied, but he could read nothing in the bundle of clothing which was presented to his gaze.

"True, Beachy Head is on our right, but that cannot help us in landing. We must lay off and on until daylight with so dangerous a coast."

"Dangerous! So the coast is dangerous!" said the passenger, with seeming alarm. "They have led me into danger, and at a time when I have my bronchi—"

What it was that he had Captain Redmond could not learn, for a violent fit of coughing interrupted the explanation.

"Dangerous—and I shall get wet," he concluded, presently.

"You need not be wet, sir, unless you please to jump into the sea. It's to keep you in a dry skin that I hold off the coast till daybreak."

"Thank you, master—I'm sure I'm much obliged, Master Red—Redmond," replied the passenger, speaking with difficulty, on account of his troublesome cough.

"Some rich old fellow, who has more money than courage," thought the captain as he again turned to watch the dim outline of the shore.

"I ought to know that voice," said the passenger to himself as he glanced furtively at the master. "I wish that I had seen him by daylight," and, no longer troubled by the stoop or the dreadful cough which had won the sympathy of the master, he went aft to find a partially sheltered seat.

Two female passengers were near the spot which he had selected for rest and meditation. They had come on deck during his conversation with the master, and while the elder of the two was quietly sitting by the rail and looking over at the phosphorescent trail of light which the little craft left behind; now and then turning her gaze upon the few stars which shone through a cloudy sky.

"Ah, they are here," said the passenger to himself as he nearly stumbled over the elder woman; "I thought they were below—however, the girl cannot recognise me now."

Drawing as near to them as he could without attracting attention, the muffled man took a seat.

The maiden was too much absorbed to notice his approach, but presently she turned to speak.

"And that was England—that dark cloud was dear England! Aunt Rachel, I feel as if I should fall on my face and kiss the first bit of English soil which receives me."

"You will soon have too much of it, perhaps, and wish yourself back in France."

"Never, aunt! I could never weary of England, England—the land of my dreams for so many years. Tell me now, Aunt Rachel—tell me why—"

The girl hesitated, and turned her eyes towards the sea.

"What is it that you wish to ask?"

"Tell me my story again, please—I know you have told me before, but I want to hear it now—now, almost within sight of my native land."

"There is little to tell, child—very little," Dame Rachel began; but she once more repeated the story that she had told the girl in France—a story to which the maiden listened intently.

It was a simple story indeed, as told by Dame Rachel, and can be related in a few words: Victorine Hatton, the maiden by her side, was the child of her only sister Gertrude, who had married a plain country farmer some seventeen years before. They were distantly related to Sir Christopher Hatton, and on the death of both parents Sir Christopher had taken pity on the poor little orphan, then scarcely five years of age, and had sent her to France to receive the ordinary education of the girls of that period.

Dame Rachel herself had been in service in Wales ever since she was a girl, and knew very little of her sister Gertrude. It was not until some years later that she even heard of her sister's death. She knew nothing of the little girl until a few weeks before the present time, when Sir Christopher had sent for her, Dame Rachel, and had offered her a living if she would become the guardian of this child.

"I gladly accepted it, Victorine, not only for your sake, but for my own. We are very humble people, my dear, very humble, and my life has been a hard struggle."

"But if you are of Sir Christopher's family—"

"Ah! child, let me tell you more—we are too distantly related to have any claim on him, and he made one stipulation—that you were never to claim him, or to presume upon his kindness."

"He has never given me a chance to do so. But, aunt, that is not all—tell me of my mother. Poor, dear mamma, how sad to die so young! Tell me of her, Aunt Rachel."

"Oh, dear, I know so little about her. We were separated when little girls, and we are too humble to be of consequence."

Such was Dame Rachel's story, and it was evident, to the maiden herself, that the aunt desired to impress upon her mind the fact of their being very humble people.

"Poor mamma! she's an angel now," the girl mused, half aloud, then with a deep sigh relapsed into silence. The tenor of her thoughts was shown by her following remark.

"Aunt Rachel," she began, presently, "this is not the way that I had hoped to visit my home. Home? I have none; but I mean it is not the way that I hoped to visit my native land. If I have relations, why have they not claimed me before? If I have none, why am I sent for now? Ah! how often have I dreamed of the day when I should visit England; and sometimes I think that I can remember my mamma. In my dreams, even, there is one strong picture which seems like memory to me. I think I can remember a palace, almost, and in it my beautiful mamma playing with me, a little child, in her lap. I remember a ray of sunshine which came through the stained windows, making her golden hair seem like a rainbow. Aunt, I'm sure mamma had hair like mine; not dark like yours?"

"Yes, she had," said the elder woman, vaguely, turning away her head, and feeling a thrill of pain at the earnestness of the young heart beside her.

"I knew it—I felt it—I may say, remember it. And her beautiful face—oh! I can see it now! I can see her sitting there with me in her lap; I can see a gentleman leaning over her chair, now feeling her wavy hair, and then bending to play with the child she holds, who is laughing and tumbling in glee. I can see her happy face—"

"Hush, child, do not talk so."

"Aunt Rachel, you are weeping; why do you weep?"

"With something like inspiration the maiden had spoken of her vision—memory, rather—the memory which had haunted her mind for years; and only paused when a sob broke on her ear, and she turned to find her aunt in tears.

At that moment the muffled passenger was seized with a fit of coughing, and Dame Rachel nearly sprang from her seat.

"I—no, no, child, I am not weeping!" she cried, in an excited manner. "All this is only a dream—merely a dream which comes from reading those foreign books and plays. We are low-born people, Victorine, and, unless as a servant, your mother could not have been in a palace. You must drive such thoughts from your head, child."

"But I cannot, Aunt Rachel—this picture is so vivid that it will not be driven away. I can remember on mamma's neck the very chain which I have. If she were a servant, how could she have had the rich jewels which were left to me?"

Again the passenger was seized with his fit of coughing, again startling the dame so that the maiden's attention was drawn to the fact.

"My child, you do not know the world or you would never speak of such things. What poor girl with beauty could not have jewels if she would accept them? Seek not to inquire of such things, for—"

The sentence was uncompleted, for the maiden had sprung to her feet, and was standing erect before the dame.

"Aunt, it is false!—the meaning that you would convey to me is untrue. Oh, my angel mamma! I will never believe ill of you," said the maiden, with a trembling voice, raising her eyes to Heaven as she uttered the concluding words.

"My dear child, I did not mean—you mistake!"—she rose to follow the girl, who had started away.

"Listen to me, Victorine; let me explain to you—"

"Not now—say no more about it now," she replied, with a sob, allowing the dame to lead her back to the seat.

There was one earnest listener to this conversation beside the muffled passenger, for the man at the helm, without a single look or sign of attention, had tried to catch each word. Much of it had been lost to him, but as the maiden rose he had seen a signal from the passenger opposite, and an answer from the dame.

Scarcely had Victorine taken her seat ere Dame Rachel sprang to the side of the vessel, and walked a few yards away.

"Is not that land? I think it is," she said. Immediately the muffled man crossed the deck, as if to look, standing a short distance from her. Although he did not once turn his head, the sailor heard his voice in communication with the dame; but the one word "jewels" was all that he could catch.

"There is some plot here," thought he; "some plot against this maiden. If she will hear me she shall not lack a warning."

Quickly turning to the other side of the helm, which brought him close to the girl, he whispered to her:

"Hush! do not look or speak—be on your guard, and do not tell where your jewels are. Keep the secret; I'll explain if I can."

He had kept his eyes fastened upon the sail, and the dame returned without a suspicion that he had overheard their conversation.

Victorine felt her heart throbbing painfully as she heard this seeming confirmation of suspicions which had flitted through her own mind. Why had her aunt started so when this stranger coughed? What had passed between them to attract the attention of this man?

"It was but a cloud, and I fancied it was land," said the dame, returning. "What was I saying—oh! those jewels, where are they, dear?"

"Where should they be, aunt, but in my keeping?" the girl replied, again feeling the pain in her heart as she thought how soon this question had followed the warning.

"Say nothing of them, my child, nor anger Sir Christopher by making useless inquiries into the past. We are very humble passengers, dependent upon him for our very subsistence. Do not deceive yourself, child, and annoy him. He would stop his allowance to us, and what would there be for us but the life of hinds?"

"Better that than to live on charity. If I am entitled to this, Aunt Rachel, he must recognise me as one of his kin; if not, then I will work from year to year rather than live on his bounty."

"But have you no thought of me—for your old aunt who would again be turned out upon the world to suffer?"

"Surely he would not permit that. If you are my aunt you are nearer to him than I am. If he is bound to aid one of us, it must be you."

"Oh, no; he is bound to neither of us. It is for your sake that I am employed—do not drive me away by—"

"Aunt, let us go below—I am cold," said Victorine, rising.

She could not promise to refrain from making inquiries about her mother, but her heart was touched by the thought that by doing so she might be doing an injury to another.

"I cannot feel one spark of kindred feeling for her," thought the maiden, "yet how do I know that she is not my aunt? Let Sir Christopher give all to her; I will have none of it unless it is my right, and then—"

This "then" led her off into a long train of thought, which kept asleep from her eyes for many an hour.

The sailor watched the maiden as she went below, nor did the keen glances of the muffled passenger escape his attention.

"Ah! you old villain," thought he, "you must work your plans out of my sight, for if you attempt to wrong her here I'll smash in your top-lights."

Meantime the muffled man had risen from his seat, and now stood looking out upon the sea. For the past hour Captain Redmond had been nervously pacing the deck waiting for the passengers to go below; and he was in no pleasant frame of mind when he had to give the order to put about the "Marquise" in the presence of this man.

"I thought as much," said the latter to himself; "I fancied that patience would reveal the secret. Let us see what his next move will be."

So, to give the captain rope enough to hang himself, the passenger went below as if to retire.

Scarcely had he disappeared when the master took a lantern from its place of concealment, and sat with it over the bows. The passenger remained but a few moments below; and when he returned to the deck a flash of light upon the water drew his attention.

One glance sufficed to show him whence it came, and hastily stepping forward he peeped over the bows. Crouched down upon the ropes, the light of the lantern full upon his face, was Captain Redmond; and the passenger started as he recognised in the master one whom he had long sought to find.

One look was sufficient, and, without being seen himself, the passenger walked back to the gangway, seeing as he did so an answering signal from the shore.

"So, so, my fine fellow! Then the celebrated Captain Redmond, of the 'Marquise,' is my old friend. This night puts—ah; let me see the amount of the reward."

Fumbling in his pockets for a time, the man drew out a packet of papers, and went below to read one of them by the cabin light.

"Repute—let me see—it puts one thousand pounds in my pocket. Stay! only a thousand—he's worth three times that to me if I can manage him. I'll see what he thinks of ascending Tyburn—what's his opinion of hanging in general." With a chuckle as these thoughts flew through his mind, the man replaced the papers in his pocket, and again went on deck.

The "Marquise" was now running along the coast, heading towards France, and it was easy to see that she was making for a small light which

glimmered at times from a dark cliff plainly visible from the deck.

Captain Redmond was giving orders for lowering a small boat, and, concealing himself behind a sail, the passenger watched the preparations with an eager eye. The shore light, which only shone out from time to time, had disappeared, and in some perplexity the master again took the lantern over the bows.

A flash from the shore gave an immediate answer, showing that those who were waiting for the vessel to arrive were on the alert. The "Marquise" was now nearly abreast of the signal point, and, giving orders to heave-to, the master gave the word to lower the boat.

With a splash she fell into the wave. Captain Redmond was about to step over the side, when the passenger touched his shoulder.

"Ah! Master Redmond—you are going on shore?" wheezed he, as if short of breath.

"Suppose I am, sir, what then?"

"You! that I will go also."

"Oh! impossible. Do you not know the danger of landing on these rocky shores? You would not have a dry rag on your back; and remember your bronch—bronch—what is it that you have?"

"Thank you for reminding me of it, Master Redmond, but I will go all the same."

"You cannot, sir," replied the captain, with irritation; "let me go—I have no time to lose."

"You are right there—you have not much time to lose. When one lives as Master Redmond does time seems an object to him. One never knows the value of time until he has been condemned to the gallows."

With a sudden start the captain broke from the hold of the passenger, and for a moment peered closely into his face. The disguise was impervious; but he bent forward to whisper:

"Who are you? Are you a spy upon me? If so, you will find a wet jacket, sure enough."

"It would not be the first man who walked the plank by Master Redmond's order."

"Say no more, sir; explain yourself at once, or I will call my men to throw you overboard. I see you've remained on deck to watch me; the information will not go far unless—"

"Unless what? Come, Master Redmond, say all you wish," said the passenger, coolly, when the captain hesitated. "Come here to the light." He had drawn a paper from his pocket, and now bent over it to whisper in the captain's ear a name which seemed to fill his heart with terror.

Taking out the lantern, the paper was put in the captain's hands, and he read the queen's proclamation, offering a reward of one thousand pounds for his arrest.

"Ah, Kelloway, did you think that I should not know you, even without a beard? Come, man, I am a friend, and instead of delivering you up for the sake of one thousand pounds, I want to put just double that amount in your own pocket. It's not generosity, Kelloway, for you can help to put several thousands in my pocket. How is it, man, war or peace?"

"Who are you? Are you man or devil, or what are you? I'll be hanged if I did not take you for a simple countryman."

"Very good, Kelloway—"

"Hist! there may be ears on the alert."

"Very good, ha, ha!" laughed the passenger, in the harsh voice that he had formerly used. "Very good, indeed—look!"

Stooping to the lantern, after taking a careful glance around, the passenger bared his face, and with one look of recognition Master Redmond extended his hand with a hearty greeting.

CHAPTER IV.

The purpose you undertake is dangerous.

Henry IV.

It was after midnight when Captain Redmond and his passenger entered the small boat which had been rocking beside the "Marquise" during their conversation, and pushed away from the vessel.

Two seamen were plying the oars, and the captain sat in the stern, talking in low tones to the man by his side.

"Remember, now, that I warned you fairly," said the master, when they had left the vessel some distance behind; "I told you of the danger, and unless you can satisfy them, your life will not be worth a ha'penny."

"Who are they?"

"How can I tell? I know who came on my last trip, but how can I say who will meet us to-night? You know that one set of men rarely comes twice. It would be dangerous to do so—and the men who manage affairs at court have been shrewd enough thus far."

"Not so shrewd as they suppose," the man thought, but giving an assent to the assertion he asked whose head had managed it so shrewdly. This was more than Master Redmond could tell; but, as

if his friend, as he now called him, knew the secrets of his voyages, he proceeded to speak of them freely.

It would be tedious to leave the reader to pick out this history from Master Redmond's conversation when it can be told in fewer words.

Owing to the severe laws against the Catholics in England, they were obliged to conduct all of their operations on the Continent. The French court was, at this time, the headquarters of Mary's party, and all communications with their friends in England had to be carried on clandestinely.

The "Marquise" was one of the vessels employed by this party to carry letters. On the nights that she was expected to come in a party of men was sent down the coast, and, selecting some place where they would be most secure from discovery, these men waited for Captain Redmond's signal.

There were several points for landing, but the favourite one was a high cliff some few miles from Beachy Head, half-way down which was a level plateau, upon which there was a heavy growth of shrubs and trees. From above it was almost inaccessible, but a narrow footpath led up from the beach, and even this could only be traversed by men who had learned the way by daylight. It was, therefore, tolerably secure, and the danger of being detected while actually receiving this treasonable correspondence was comparatively small.

It was upon this plateau that the signal was seen on the night in question. The black cliff loomed up towards the sky as the little boat came beneath it. There was no longer a light to guide the way.

In perfect silence they pulled along the shore, while Captain Redmond peered into the darkness for certain landmarks. At length he gave the word and the boat was driven upon the beach, the master and his friend walking immediately towards the cliff.

A few paces brought them to a rocky pass, only shown to exist when the bushes were pushed aside, and, by climbing a short distance, they came upon a winding path leading up to the plateau.

The distance was half traversed when the master paused, and turned to his friend.

"Again I warn you that it is perilous for you to venture into their presence."

"Lead on, Master Redmond."

"Will nothing induce you to stay here until my return? A suspicion that you are a spy would cost your life before you could have a moment to explain. I could not save you—indeed, I, too, might be suspected."

"Is it for yourself that you fear, then?" said the man, with a sneer; "if so, give me the packet and let me go alone."

"I will do all I can to set you right," said the captain, turning at once to begin the second ascent.

A few moments' hard climbing brought them to the plateau, where they were halted by a sentry. Captain Redmond gave the password, and the man disappeared. A flash of light came from the bushes as a door seemed to open, and the sound of voices in lively conversation, with a few notes of a convivial song, were momentarily heard.

The sounds ceased as the sentry reappeared, and when the door again opened to admit the newcomers there was no light to show what kind of a room they had entered. To Captain Redmond, however, the place was familiar. On many a dark and stormy night had he climbed that very cliff; on many a night, when thoroughly drenched with rain and spray, had he found a warm welcome in that room.

It was a small place at best—a mere cave dug in the side of the cliff to furnish a retreat and shelter to the men engaged on this perilous duty; but could its secrets be told, one would be astonished at the magnitude of the events which depended on it, would wonder at the convivial scenes among men condemned for high treason or guilty of it, would shudder at the deeds of blood of which these walls could tell.

A feeble light saved the room from total darkness when the strangers entered, and by it they saw the indistinct forms of several persons sitting around a low table.

"All right, Nick?" asked one as the door closed.

"All right; he is a friend. Nay, more, he is high in authority."

"Give us the light then," and, as the order was given, two keys were raised from the lanterns, the bright light nearly blinding the two men who had been so long in darkness.

The words that were uttered between these two seemed simple enough, yet the stranger knew that they had a deep significance. He knew well that had Captain Redmond decided to betray him, he had to speak but a word, and ere the lights had been disclosed the light of his own life would have gone out for ever. All his life this man had been the comrade of such men as these, and understood their ways and feelings. He knew that a boldness, almost a foolhardy daring, was the only thing which could win their respect.

For a moment after the lights were uncovered

the men looked at the stranger in silence, waiting for some token of his standing; but, as he said nothing, the captain of the band turned to the master.

"Redmond, your friend is—what name?"

"Ah, yes! He is true. His name is—*is*—a—"

Captain Redmond paused, remembering the compact he had made not to mention the name until requested or permitted to do so.

"Well!—*is* what?" asked the captain, impatiently, looking from one to the other, while his hand played with the handle of his dagger. "Come, air! in these times we can admit no disguises. Either you are a friend or a foe; if the last, you are reckless to throw away your life by coming here; if a friend, give us veritable proof."

"He has the proof—he has proofs from—"

"Papers alone will not do, Captain Redmond. Papers are the excuses of rogues. Come—the name!"

"What matters a name? Would not any spy have a name glibly on his tongue?" asked the stranger, coolly.

"Spy!" repeated the men, springing to their feet, while the foremost drew his dagger.

The stranger stepped back a pace or two before the lowering faces which confronted him. Captain Redmond sprang before him.

"Hold! hold!" cried he, raising his hands. "I vouch for him, comrades; he is true enough, as you shall see. Give him a chance."

"You trifle with your life, whoever you are. Why do you still keep your face disguised? Show yourself in one minute's time, or I will order you to be thrown over the cliff."

"A sad day for you, Captain Oscar Harold, when you order injury to me. You would not find another patron to save you, should you kill me as you did the Yorkshire merchant. And you, John Garrett—who would pay your seat at the lash? Who would take you from prison, Casper Brett, and pay your debts? or pull you from the Thames when drunk, Dick Shepherd, or—"

"Parry! it's Parry!" was now the cry, and with a hearty laugh the notorious spy tore the wrappings from his throat and face.

"Saprist! It's the doctor, sure enough. Hurrah! Nick, how did you discover him?"

"He discovered me, rather," said the master, laughing also; "and I must say he gave me a fright at it too."

"Come, come! Captain Oscar, are you going to give me some brandy, or have me thrown over the cliff? Do one or the other soon."

Captain Oscar made no reply for a moment, and seemed to be revolving something in his mind. He was in bad humour. The reference to the murder of the merchant was injudicious, for Parry knew that it was a sore point; but he felt that he must make these desperate men fear him as well as like him.

"Bring on the wine," said the captain, absently, throwing himself into a seat.

"Then you are not going to have me thrown over, eh?"

"Don't rely on it, Doctor Parry. Report says you have played double already."

"Many a time, worthy captain. Indeed, I'm on my way to play double again. Without regard for my neck, they have ordered me to London."

"You have papers—what papers?"

"As good as were ever writ. Listen!" Parry took a packet of papers from his breast, and held up a letter. "Here is a letter from the cardinal. Can one read among you? At any rate, you know the shape of the sign, Captain Oscar. Do you see 'Comor'?"

The captain's face relaxed a little as he recognised the well-known sign manual of the cardinal, and he looked with increasing interest upon the doctor.

"And here is a safeguard. Do you see that, Captain Oscar? Examine that while I read the cardinal's words to you:

"He who bears this letter, given under my hand and seal, Doctor Parry, or by whatever name he may be known, is an authorised agent, and is empowered to make contracts, and give orders for the disbursement of moneys. The utmost confidence is reposed in him, and the well-wishers of our suffering Queen Mary are requested to give him safe conduct at all times and places. 'Comor.'"

Not a word of this was contained in the letter, as Captain Redmond well knew, but Parry read it off without pause or hesitation, and with an air which carried conviction. He had won them completely now, and not a man there but was willing to submit to his orders.

For nearly an hour they talked briskly of the new plot, drank deeply, and went over old tales of personal adventures; but presently Captain Redmond drew their attention.

"Business! business!" called he, to make them silent. "Come, Parry, I am loth to leave these boon comrades, but the 'Marquise' must land at early dawn."

"Business, then," said Parry, sentimentally, taking the management of affairs upon himself. "Where is the packet?"

"I have it," replied Captain Oscar. "Give it me."

The command was brusquely given, and if Captain Oscar hesitated a second after it, he felt no doubts of Parry, but rather resented the form of speech before his men. Parry took the letters and ran over them two or three times, fixing in his mind the names of the parties to whom they were addressed. Two letters he held still when the remainder were placed upon the table.

"I appeal to your judgment," said Parry, holding up the two letters. "Here are letters addressed to one whom I distrust. I have good reason to suppose him a spy. From my personal knowledge of this man I believe that the delivery of these letters would not only endanger our safety, but that of the cause. Ought I not to retain them until inquiries can be made?"

"Who is he—who is the spy?" asked two or three in a breath.

"If there is no doubt—" began Captain Oscar, slowly.

"None in the world. They—our superior, I mean—are often led to trust men who are not trustworthy; it is our duty to see to such cases. I will attend to these."

"But who is he? What is the name?"

"Philip Howard, Earl of Arundel."

"Arundel!"

"It is no marvel that you utter the name with surprise. By my faith! it would be the worth of our necks to deliver many letters to one who is a favourite with Queen Bess. Well, a stirrup-cup with you, Captain Oscar," said the spy, jovially, putting the two letters in his pocket. "To your healths, comrades, and a safe return."

They drank out the cups, and were about to cover the lights ere the door was opened, when Parry again spoke.

"I'd a great mind to go away without giving you satisfaction on a point each of you is now thinking about. There's not one of you but is wishing to take me aside to ask for a share in the disbursement of these funds—eh? Well, then, in consideration of my reception to-night—and as Captain Oscar did not have you throw me over the cliff"—glancing slyly at the captain, who looked heartily ashamed—"or kill me with your daggers—"

"You had a narrow escape, nevertheless. The times are too strange to admit of trifling," interrupted the captain.

"Very true; but I wanted to test your mettle. You'll answer for my purpose. Now, as many of you wish to join me in an adventure—on my guarantee of good pay, and a paid scot—say the word."

There was not one who hesitated.

"Good. Meet me at Hacker's tavern, when you have delivered the letters. Now then, Master Redmond—"

(To be continued.)

PARIS FOOD SUPPLIES.—The following quotations will give an idea of the markets: "Fresh butter (only to be found in small quantities), at prices varying from 5 fr. to 10 fr. the pound; salt butter, almost unobtainable, 3 fr. 50 c. to 3 fr. 75 c.; chickens and pullets, 7 fr. to 12 fr. each; geese, 16 fr. to 24 fr. (you may have a horse for about the same price); turkeys, 15 fr. to 20 fr., without the giblets; rabbits are tolerably plentiful, and fetch 6 fr. to 8 fr. each. River fish is not scarce, but the prices are rare: Moderate sized pike, 7 fr. to 14 fr. each; barbel, small, 4 fr. to 7 fr.; fine eels, 12 fr. to 15 fr. each; small tench, 1 fr.; a small plate of gudgeons, 1 fr. 50 c. to 3 fr. Vegetables are quoted as follows: cauliflowers, 75 c. to 1 fr. 20 c.; cabbages, 1 fr. 20 c. to 1 fr. 50 c.; fine fresh beans, 1 fr. 25 c. to 1 fr. 50 c.; green haricot beans, 2 fr. the litre; and these are market prices, be it remembered. Spinach is just now plentiful, though not cheap; and fruit is very dear—we pay 3d. or more for good apples, and grapes are beginning to fail us completely, and are also dear—as are pears, etc."

COURTS OF JUSTICE.—Notice is given that application is intended to be made to Parliament in the ensuing session for an act to authorise the Commissioners of Her Majesty's Works and Public Buildings to acquire and take, by compulsion or agreement, additional property, for the site of the Courts of Justice, in the parish of St. Clement Danes, and for other purposes connected with the proposed Courts of Justice. The large block of buildings which the commissioners propose to take is that which commences at Clement's Inn gateway on the east, extending to Dane's Inn on the west. Northward, the block is bounded by Clement's Inn Hall, and southward by the Strand. It contains, in addition to the hall, several large houses, amongst others, Carr's Hotel, Tuxford's printing-office, the

Vestry Hall, and a long row of houses in Clement's Inn. It is not stated what is the precise object to which the new site is to be applied. There are no signs of the courts being commenced.

THE DIAMOND MERCHANT.

CHAPTER XXIII.

Thou may'st torture me,
But thou canst not make me speak. *Shakespeare.*

UNABLE to see, by reason of the darkness, Sir Edred thrust his hand through the bars of the grating. He found that the opening sloped downwards, and that though his arm was inserted up to his shoulder, he could not reach its edge in the other dungeon.

But though he could not touch the edge of the window in the other cell, a hand, reaching up from that cell, touched and grasped his.

At the same time a hoarse whisper reached his ear, thus:

"I am Aldort, and a prisoner like thyself. Speak in whispers, for though I am alone in my dungeon, there are guards before my door, no doubt."

"So your master lost the battle?" whispered Sir Edred.

"The battle, the fortress, the chieftainship of the forest, and, for all I know, his life," replied Aldort. "It went not well with me in the armour of a knight. I had scarcely rushed into the fight to repulse a party of stormers led by Black Senlis than he dealt me a blow on my helmet with his mace, and I knew no more. When I regained my senses the battle was over, my armour had been stripped from me, and the old Baron of Zweibrudden was reading that same packet I showed you. The fiend took the writing, whatever it was, for the reading thereof made him furious, and he bade those about him beat me with clubs until I should confess where you might be found. They belaboured me as I helped to belabour that fellow, Anselm the guide, the other day, and left me half dead ere they ceased. But I swore I knew nothing of Sir Edred Van De Veer, except that Sir Fritz had told me he had slain him and cast his body into one of the pits of the forest. Then Baron Hermann bade his men cast me into some dungeon where the secret might be starved from me, so they have placed me here."

"You know nothing of the fate of Sir Fritz?"

"I questioned those I could, but received only jeers or blows in reply. Hence I conclude he is not dead. Such is my hope, at least."

"A very sorry hope, I fear," said Sir Edred. "But can you not escape from that dungeon?"

"Were I a bird or a lizard I might."

"Can you not tell me how I may find a way to make the pillar revolve from my side?"

"No, for there is none. The only spring that sets the pillar in motion is on the other side. Even that secret was known to but three—Sir Fritz, myself, and Anselm Britzo. Anselm we left a dead man near the Riders' Court. So only Sir Fritz can liberate you, and he may be dead, or a prisoner like ourselves. It is well I stored your prison with food and drink, for we may hold our lives from starvation for a time, until Sir Fritz can release us. If he has escaped, he will gather a force somewhere, and try to avenge himself upon the barons. If he is dead, I may weary the patience of my captors—you sharing your provisions with me—and they may release me. When released I will soon set you free."

The conversation here ceased. Aldort had no plan of action to propose, nor could he tell Sir Edred why Sir Fritz had acted towards the diamond merchant in the way he had.

Days passed on, and no tidings reached the prisoners of the fate of Sir Fritz. Twice a day the dungeon of Aldort was visited by Baron Hermann, that he might see how famine was subduing his obstinacy in not revealing the hiding-place of the diamond merchant. But as the latter was amply provisioned, and supplied Aldort with food and drink through the opening in the wall, the man remained as stubborn and robust as ever, greatly to the wonder of the baron and his party.

After two weeks had passed the merchant heard Baron Hermann thus address Aldort:

"The evil one undoubtedly feeds thee! Thou art as plump and active now as when we placed thee here. Yet no food or drink hast thou had from us. We will find a way to wrest thy secret from thee."

On being left alone after this Aldort whispered through the opening:

"Art there, Sir Edred?"

"Ay, faithful fellow."

"They intend to torture me."

"I fear they do. I wonder they have not done so ere now."

"They had faith in trying the torture of hunger

and thirst—especially upon a man known to be a ravenous eater. Did you ever see a man starved to death?"

"Not I, though if our imprisonment last two weeks longer I fear I shall see myself starved. The wine is nearly all used, and there is but one jar of water left. But while a drop or a shred of dried meat remains you shall share it, Aldort."

"That may be, Sir Edred, since your life hangs on mine. But fear not to refuse to share with me any longer," replied Aldort. "It is not to serve you that I keep the secret of your place. It is because I promised Sir Fritz that no man should ever learn it from my lips. Then there is a spice of pleasure in baffling the old fiend of a baron. But he intends to try torture, since he sees I cannot be starved."

"As you say, I have no claim upon you," said Sir Edred. "I cannot expect that you will endure fearful agony for my sake."

"Of course not."

"Then when they begin to put you to the torture you will reveal that I am here?"

"Not I. They may do their worst, and I shall not break my promise to Sir Fritz. I have never disobeyed him but once, and you see what has come of it. I disobeyed him, and benefited him not the value of a straw. Black Senlis beat me down before I could strike a blow, and now, if my master be in peril anywhere, I cannot lift a finger in his defence. No, I shall not reveal your hiding-place. They may torture me here in this dungeon, or they may carry me elsewhere to torture me. I think the torture will be inflicted in this dungeon."

"Why are you of that belief?"

"Because I have learned from the baron that only he, his son, and four of the attendants who accompanied him from Zweibrudden know that I am alive. He has given it out to the Riders that I am dead. I was not unpopular among our fellows, and though so many of them are now of the baron's party, I am very sure they would not willingly permit my torture, nor even imprisonment. So the baron will torture me here, in this dungeon, lest some of my old comrades learn of my misfortunes. I had great hope of the interposition of some—nay, of all of them—until Baron Hermann let fall the information to me, in a taunt, that only he, his son, and his four attendants knew of my existence. But now swear to me an oath, Sir Edred."

"To what effect, Aldort?"

"It may be that I shall groan and howl under the torture the barons will inflict upon me. Didst ever see a man tortured?"

"Not in the manner you expect," replied Sir Edred, shuddering.

"It is most dreadful to see and hear, except to such as are used to seeing and hearing it, Sir Edred. Therefore I would have a solemn oath from you, lest you and not I betray the secret Sir Fritz has placed in my keeping. So swear, by all that you hold sacred and dear, not to do what there is danger that a man like you may do—call out, 'Torture him no more, for I am here.'"

"The thought was in my mind to do so, Aldort."

"So I suspected, for I have heard of the generous and rash character of Sir Edred Van De Veer. I am but a half-simpleton, yet I remember that Sir Fritz said to me, 'Give even your own life to save the life of Edred Van De Veer.' Why he said it I know not, and care not. I only know that he said it. It was one of his commands. It will not benefit you nor me to call out when your ears are tortured with the groans of my agony. Baron Hermann will slay you, and me also. If I survive the torture I may be set free, and so save you, and thereby redeem my violated pledge to Sir Fritz. So swear, by all your hopes, whatever they may be, to stop your ears when the torture begins, and to lie motionless in the most distant quarter of your prison."

"I know not that it would not be well for me to give myself up, and so end the torturing suspense in which I am," replied Sir Edred, in a tone of despair. "If you be killed, or taken to another dungeon, my remaining provisions being consumed, I can live but a few days longer. Better a quick death than to die by thirst and hunger."

"Very true. Nevertheless help me to keep the promise I made to Sir Fritz."

"So be it. I swear not to cry out."

Here the colloquy ended, and hours passed before Sir Edred again heard a sound from Aldort's dungeon. Indeed, he had been asleep, dreaming that he had escaped from the forest, and that he was dwelling in safety and happiness with his wife and Ernest in some distant city, when his slumber was put to flight by a wild cry of extreme pain.

He raised himself upon his elbow. A glare of light from blazing torches depicted high up upon the wall of his prison the shape of the small, grated opening, which, sloping downward towards Aldort's dungeon, opened into the latter, about five feet from its

floor. In Sir Edred's dungeon this opening, as has been told, was about eight feet from its floor, and the thickness of the wall it pierced was about four feet.

The light of torches blazing in the cell of Aldort passing through this opening, made a temporary picture of Sir Edred's grating upon the opposite wall of his prison. This light and the cry he had heard told him that Aldort's torture had begun. How long it had been going on Sir Edred could not divine, as he had been suddenly aroused from a profound sleep by that single shriek of unbearable pain.

His own sensations were horrible. A man was being tortured that a secret might be wrested from him. That secret was the hiding-place of Sir Edred. If the man's endurance gave way, Sir Edred would be dragged forth and put to death—perhaps by tortures as dreadful as this man was struggling against. If the man's endurance defied the torture, it was a fearful thing to be within hearing of his groans.

"Heaven have mercy upon him!" thought Sir Edred as he thrust the ends of his fingers into his ears. But that did not lessen the horror of his mind. He could imagine all that was being done. He could imagine a thousand things that were not being done.

He muffled his head in his bed covering, and strove to hear nothing. But his imagination was as loud-tongued in his brain as if he held his ear to the opening.

He heard no more cries nor groans. The endurance of Aldort was like that of a wolf. The wolf keeps fiercely silent even while the fangs of the hounds tear him to pieces. That single sharp cry was the only cry of pain uttered by Aldort. After that he set his teeth hard, and glared silent defiance at the two barons and their four attendants, for it was they who were about him, with instruments and cruel contrivances for torture.

For more than an hour Sir Edred remained motionless, with his head muffled. To him it seemed as if he had been thus an age. At length he ventured to remove the muffling.

Hearing the sound of voices, but no groans, he listened.

"The stubborn knave is dead," said a voice, which was that of Baron Senlis.

"Or feigning to be dead," said another, and Sir Edred knew it was Baron Hermann who spoke. "Try him with the red-hot pincers again, Bartolph."

On hearing this Sir Edred was sorely tempted to thrust aside his pledge to Aldort, and to call out, but the words of the next speaker checked him.

"He is dead, my lord," said the voice.

"And his secret has perished with him!" roared Baron Hermann. "Now would I give my castle at Zweibrudden had he lived long enough to reveal the hiding-place of the diamond merchant. I told the obstinate fool I would share the diamonds with him, if he would point them out as well as the lurking-place of Edred Van De Veer."

"Why does this baron so desire my capture and death?" wondered Sir Edred.

"Come," said the voice of Baron Hermann, "since the fellow is dead, let him lie. We will see to the disposal of the body to-morrow. This must not come to the ears of the Riders, for I hear the knave was very popular among them. His master too, I fear, has many friends among those who are in the forest."

"True," said the voice of Black Senlis, "and it is a pity his master escaped. I would it were Sir Fritz, and not this fellow, lying dead here."

"Doubtless Sir Fritz has furnished a feast for the wolves ere this," said Baron Hermann; "he was severely hurt," he said, and though he escaped us, he must have perished somewhere in the forest."

"Since this fellow is dead," said Black Senlis, "why not let him remain here? Let the dungeon door be locked and the key be thrown away."

"Ay; it will serve him for a grave as well as any other place," was the reply of Baron Hermann; then, by the sound of an iron door and the clash of a bolt shot into its place, Sir Edred knew that all that remained of the miserable Aldort was left alone in the dungeon and was designed by those who left the body to be left there for ever.

From this overheard conversation Sir Edred learned that Sir Fritz had escaped after the battle in which Aldort had so vainly sought to aid him. But as fully two weeks had passed since the battle, and even these bitter and keen-searching foes of Sir Fritz had heard no tidings of him, there was good reason to believe that he was dead, and his body devoured by the wolves of the forest.

Aldort was dead too—had died under the torture of the cruel barons—died with his secret unrevealed—was dead there in that cell, and left there to decay and moulder away.

"Then there is now no one who knows that I am alive," mused Sir Edred, in dismay. "I had some faint hope while Aldort lived. To think that he knew I was here, and [that he was eager to have me

free, was a solace—a something that made my heart keep courage up. I am, as it were, a live man buried with a dead one."

He thought he heard a strange sound, and, hastening to the opening, listened. For a long time he could not imagine the true nature of the noise he could but indistinctly hear. But at length he understood its cause and meaning.

The door of the dungeon of Aldort was being bricked up on the outside. The very fact that the door of a dungeon was there was being shut out from all who might approach thither.

Sir Edred returned to his bed—not to sleep, but to think, though his thoughts were bitter and black with despair.

At that hour he could see nothing, not even his hand if held close to his face. Only when it was bright day without could a faint ray of light from the dungeon of Aldort be discerned in the immediate vicinity of the opening which pierced the wall between the two dungeons. As it was now after midnight, total darkness enshrouded the senses of the diamond merchant—a darkness so dense that he almost imagined it could be felt. Now that he believed Aldort to be dead, the darkness seemed more horrible than ever.

With Aldort had perished his last hope of escape.

CHAPTER XXIV.

Let specialties therefore be drawn between us
That covenants may be kept on either hand.

Taming of the Shrew.

At length the unhappy diamond merchant sank into sleep. To him sleep was the greatest of blessings, in fact the only solace he had left.

How long his slumber lasted he knew not, but when he awoke there was that faint ray of light about the opening which told him it was, broad day to all without.

Faint as was this light, his eyes had become so accustomed to greater darkness that objects near him were visible, at least in outline. But there was nothing in his dungeon that he had not seen before, and his gaze dwelt mournfully upon the opening in the wall.

He sprang to his feet, saying:

"I must stop up the opening! Better total darkness than this horror. Yet, if I stop up the opening, I shall, in a few hours, consume all life-sustaining air within my prison. Then will my own breath become a deadly poison to me. But better suffocation than the horror that pours in through the opening. Besides, fresh air may enter my prison through cracks and crevices unknown to me."

Grasping a blanket in his hands, he stood upon one of the baskets, and was about to try to stuff the woollen fabric into the interstices of the iron grating, when he heard a groan in Aldort's dungeon.

"See what a thing is a man's imagination!" he thought as he threw the blanket aside. "Aldort is not dead. Are you there, Aldort?" he cried aloud, with his face pressed to the iron bars.

He did not fear that any one not in the dungeon might hear him, for he knew the door had been walled up, and that Baron Hermann had doubtless been careful to take precautions against any rambling of the Riders in the vicinity of that place. So he called out, with voice clear and loud:

"Are you there, Aldort?"

"Here, Sir Edred, clinging to the edge of the opening in my prison. But speak not so loud," whispered back Aldort.

"My friend," replied the diamond merchant, with a bitter laugh which revealed his despair, "you may shout with all your strength and not be heard, save by me. They left you for dead, and have walled up the door of your dungeon. It is to be your tomb."

"I knew not that, Sir Edred. They tortured me until I swooned with pain. It is a pity I did not die in that semblance of death which must have deceived them, since there is now no hope for me. Pray tell me if you heard aught of the fate of Sir Fritz?"

Sir Edred related all that he had overheard, and Aldort replied:

"There is hope for us yet, Sir Edred. I judge that as Sir Fritz escaped, and has remained unheard of for so long, and his body not found in the eager search which must have been made for him, he was sorely wounded, and lies unable to come to our rescue. There is but one place that I know of where he may be concealed. He is probably, if alive or dead, under the care of our mother—the Sada Prostar I spoke of. Let us take hope yet. I am sorely seared and bruised, yet have received no serious hurt, and while I live I shall hope. How long may your provisions last, if shared with me?"

"By economy, three weeks, Aldort."

"If not shared with me they will sustain you six weeks, Sir Edred."

"Very true; but while they last you shall share equally with me."

"I have no claim upon you, Sir Edred. I cannot now aid nor betray you if I would. You should desire my death, if only because I disobeyed my master and so left you as you are. The longer you may live the better your chance for delivery."

"Say no more, man. I swear to share with you to the last. Wait a moment," interrupted the generous-hearted Sir Edred.

He then made two equal portions of the dried meats, the hard bread, the bottles of wine, and the jar of water. The latter he decanted into bottles from which wine had been drunk.

"Receive what I give you," he said, at the opening. "No, I will take nothing," replied the obstinate Aldort. "To take it will diminish your chances for rescue. I am but a half-simplton, yet I remember that Sir Fritz said to me, 'Lose your own life to save Sir Edred Van de Veer.' He may not be able to effect your rescue within three weeks. He may within six weeks."

"You are an obstinate fellow," said Sir Edred, "and it would be well with me had you been as mindful of the commands of your master in the beginning."

"Very true, therefore I deserve punishment. So I refuse to receive anything, and thereby your life may be sustained by my death, in obedience to his order," said Aldort, doggedly.

But the impulsive Sir Edred thrust into the opening the half of the food and drink he had prepared, and as the opening sloped downward towards Aldort's cell, the latter was forced to receive it.

"You have it now," cried Sir Edred, "and may use it or starve as you please."

So saying he retired from the opening, and proceeded to divide what provisions remained into several portions for his own use. By careful economy he believed he could sustain life for four weeks. If at the end of that time no one came to his aid, starvation would be inevitable.

A week passed on, and, except a brief chat at long intervals with Aldort, nothing occurred to break the horrible monotony of the two prisons.

But one day, while Sir Edred was pacing to and fro in his long, narrow dungeon, he heard the grating of the pillar as it began to revolve.

"Ha!" he exclaimed, in a loud voice. "Some one is coming at last! The pillar is turning!"

But, with the presence of mind which rarely failed him, he snatched up a blanket, sprang to the opening, and shouted into it:

"Some one comes! Be silent!"

He then stuffed the blanket hastily into the grating, and scarcely had he done this when the light of a lamp streamed into the prison, then the pillar ceased to revolve, and Sir Edred beheld two armed men in the niche, one behind the other.

"Good Heaven! the two barons!" he mentally exclaimed, instantly recognising Baron Hermann and Black Senlis. "I am lost!"

In the sudden terror and dismay that came upon him he retreated backward to the other end of his corridor-like cell.

"What have we here?" cried Baron Hermann, in his harsh voice, as he and Black Senlis stepped from the niche into the prison, each with his drawn sword in his hand. "Pah! a most close and heavy smell as of a prisoner's dungeon."

"If my ears did not deceive me, I heard retreating steps," said Black Senlis, holding his lamp high above his head. "T'would be rare good fortune if we have stumbled upon the hiding-place of the diamond merchant."

"Rather it may be the lair of some fierce beast; yet there is a bed, and empty baskets and bottles, Senlis! Hold the lamp higher, and keep your sword point up while we move forward and see whether this passage leads."

"Would it not be well to retire and bring some force with us?" questioned Senlis, for, as the rays of the lamp did not illumine the whole of the lofty and narrow dungeon, Sir Edred had not yet been seen, as he stood with his back against the far end.

Baron Hermann, however, bolder than his son, took the lamp, and, moving forward a few paces, saw the prisoner.

"Halt!" cried Baron Hermann, recoiling a step. "By Heaven! it is Edred Van De Veer! and the passage ends where he stands. Ho! are you there, diamond merchant? We have found him at last, Senlis. It was a lucky chance that led me to thrust my hand into the hollow back of the stone image."

"Since we have found him let us make sure end of him," said Senlis. "I am impatient to return to Karlwold to prepare for that which we meditate against Zurichbold. He is unarmed—"

"Stay! I would question him, for we know not how he came hither. Edred Van De Veer, explain your presence here."

"Go question Sir Fritz, since to him I owe my presence in this accursed dungeon," replied Sir Edred. "He captured and imprisoned me some three weeks ago."

"Ay, I suspected that. And he took your diamonds?"

"Whatever was upon me he took," replied Sir Edred, evasively.

"But had you the diamonds and jewels which for more than a year you had been collecting?"

"Go ask Sir Fritz, your fellow-robber."

"Van De Veer, some months ago you were with your wife going towards Sparburg," said Baron Hermann, "and at that time you had with you immense wealth in gems. You left her and your son on your route, while you went on a journey to collect certain debts owed to you in Italy, or to settle up some business of your own. It was your purpose, that business being done, to cease to be a diamond merchant. Now, did you leave the gems in the care of your wife, or had you them with you when captured by Sir Fritz?"

"If I tell you truly, what then, Baron Hermann?"

"You shall be set free."

"Ay, baron," replied Sir Edred. "Know that I am aware of your desire to slay me; but why you so desire, or what you are to gain by my death, I do not know. Free me, and a princely ransom shall be paid to you. Surely I have never given you cause for offence. Why do you desire my death? Set me at liberty, Baron Hermann, if it is gold or jewels you desire. Edred Van De Veer has never broken his word. You and your fellows of the forest have done me grievous wrong, yet will I promise not to speak against your fair fame, not to proclaim that Hermann of Zweibrudden and Senlis of Karlwold are chiefs of thieves and plunderers, but leave your deeds to the punishment of Heaven, if you will forthwith have me conducted in safety and unharmed to the highway near Sparburg; and I will see paid such ransom as you may demand."

"Van De Veer," replied the old baron, "I regret greatly that your diamonds have escaped me. Either Sir Fritz secured them when he captured you, or your wife has them with her. Yet not for all your diamonds, not for all the gems in the world, would I set you free—just yet. Your diamonds cannot purchase your liberty nor save your life. My son and I will decide what terms, being accepted by you, may save your life. Let me be assured, however, that you are the man I believe you to be. Bare your breast."

"Why? That your sword may more readily pierce my heart? Attack. I shall not die without a struggle, if you put me to it," replied Sir Edred, resolutely, though weaponless.

"Tush, man! We are not here to be your executioners," said Baron Hermann, well on his guard, as was his son, for the fame of the courage and prowess of Edred Van De Veer had been sounded over all Germany. More than a match for both of them had he been armed, he was not equal to either of them as he stood there, bare-headed and empty-handed, while they were clothed in mail, steel-capped, and armed both with sword and dagger. Yet so great was the fame of Edred Van De Veer that, as they confronted him, these two powerful barons, familiar with fierce combats, held their weapons pointed towards him or upraised.

"We are not here to be your executioners," said Baron Hermann. "Bare your breast, that I may see if it has a certain mark. If the mark is not there, you shall be set free with a fair ransom, and all my desire for your death shall be at an end."

"And if the mark is upon my breast?"

"Then you need not hope to escape, except it be to immediate death," replied Baron Hermann, grimly.

"Is it the mark called 'Baron Hermann's Seal' that you seek?"

"Ho! So you know its name?"

"A birth-mark, shaped like an outspread human hand?"

"Yes, it is such I seek."

"I have it, and have had it always. Is it because I have that mark that you desire my death? That would be strange, as it was because I bear the mark that Sir Fritz spared my life."

Baron Hermann and his son exchanged glances, and the former said to Senlis:

"I was right. Sir Fritz had discovered that important secret. How? But come, let us withdraw and confer upon this chance that has placed Edred Van De Veer in our power."

"It would be well to examine his dungeon, to see that he has no chance for escape," said Senlis.

"What means that blanket stuffed into the wall above?"

"I will tell you," said Sir Edred, quickly, fearing a close investigation might reveal that Aldort still lived.

"That opening, too small to admit the passage of my head, even were the grating removed, passes through

a wall four feet thick, and enters the dungeon in which remains all that is left of him whom you tortured to death several days ago."

Again the barons exchanged glances of surprise. "You walled his body up, and to keep pure the air of my prison I have placed the blanket there. It was a foul deed that was done in that dungeon, barons." "There may be one more foul done in this prison," replied Baron Hermann, sternly. "Come, Senlis, we need not fear that he can escape; he would have done so ere this had he been able. Van De Veer, when we return we will make known to you the conditions upon which you may save your life. If you accept them, expect much favour—perhaps liberty as well as life. If you reject them, expect the same death that befell him in the other cell."

These stern words having been spoken, the two barons withdrew into the niche, the pillar revolved, and Sir Edred was again alone.

After waiting a few minutes, and knowing that the grating noise made by the pillar as it revolved would give him warning of the approach of any one, Sir Edred stepped upon one of the baskets, and, withdrawing the blanket from the opening, called out to Aldort.

"I am here," replied Aldort, in a tone somewhat surly. "But why did you stop up the opening? My ears have been listening with vain eagerness to hear what was going on in there."

Sir Edred told all that had passed, and finished by saying:

"Now, my friend, what think you of my affairs?"

"You are a doomed man," replied Aldort, bluntly. "Unless Sir Fritz soon makes his appearance. He is dead, I fear. The barons doubtless stumbled upon the secret of the stone image in roaming about this wing of the fortress. There is not the ghost of a hope for you now, and, of course, not for me. They will soon return, or in the dead of night. Trust to no promises or pledges they may make you. They will, in the end, put you to death, after having used you for some grave scheme of their own. There is some important mystery connected with the fact that you bear the birth-mark called 'Baron Hermann's Seal.' What that mystery is I know not. I saw Sir Fritz seek for some such mark on the breast of the lad, your son, and, having found it, he whispered to me, 'See that no harm befall this lad, but go with him and his mother to the highway.' But, except that I have heard my mother ramble wildly in her madness of 'Baron Hermann's Seal,' and some great secret connected therewith, I know nothing of it. But no doubt wily old Baron Hermann and cruel Black Senlis do. You are a doomed man, and so am I."

"No doubt they will soon return," said Sir Edred, "and perhaps put me to death. Your chance for rescue is now better than mine, Aldort."

"In what way, Sir Edred?"

"Your provisions will sustain you two weeks longer, will they not?"

"Ay, three weeks, since I have scarce dared nibble at them, wishing to remain alive as long as possible. But I must starve in the end."

"You may be saved yet by Sir Fritz, if he is not dead. I shall probably be put to death within a few hours. If the terms of the barons suit me not, or if it suit me not to accept them, I shall make a sharp fight with them. Have you nothing in the shape of a weapon which you can pass in to me?"

"I will search about my dungeon," replied Aldort. Sir Edred, in momentary fear of the return of the barons, remained at the opening, and it seemed an age to him before he heard Aldort say:

"There is naught to be found except this club of wood. Had they left me even a nail of iron, I would have tried to work my way to daylight, as I have before told you."

"A club is a desperate man's resource," said Sir Edred as he received the primitive weapon. "With it I may chance to beat out the brains of one of them, if not of both."

"Ay, stand ready to fall upon them when the niche again comes round," remarked Aldort. "I would I were there to help you. The surprise will give you great advantage. Stand by the pillar, and, as the niche appears, charge in. I am but a half-simplton, but I can see how it could be done. Be not deceived by any terms they offer you, Sir Edred. The secret that is about 'Baron Hermann's Seal' demands your death."

"How know you that?"

"I am but a half-simplton, yet I can put this and that together which I now remember to have heard fall from my mother's lips in her times of wildness. But I am under vow to Sir Fritz not to speak of the matter. Get you to the pillar and fall upon them with the club. They can but kill you, and they mean to do that whether you accept their terms or not. Fall upon them as the lightning falls from the clouds. I have no doubt they will come alone. Their business

is not such as they will dare trust to other ears than their own."

"What if Sir Fritz were to be in the niche?"

"Ha! well thought of!" cried Aldort. "One must take care not to attack a friend."

"A fine friend has he been to me," replied Sir Edred, bitterly. "But tell me this, Aldort. In case I succeed in making my way to the other side of the pillar, what shall I find, and what course must I take to reach the vault? for in that alone can I hope to find a way to the forest."

"I like not that plan of striking blindly into the niche when it comes round again," said Aldort, gruffly. "Should it be Sir Fritz, great harm might befall him."

Sir Edred was about to speak again when the grating noise of the pillar warned him that some one was about to appear.

(To be continued.)

LEIGHTON HALL.

CHAPTER XLIV.

So Edna and Roy were betrothed, and he held and fondled the little soft hand where Charlie's ring had been, but where it was not now, for Edna had sworn never to wear that until her debt was paid. Now Roy claimed her as his own; Charlie's ring would never encircle her finger again, and she could only be glad that it was so. Charlie and her love for him seemed like a far-off dream; only the present was real, the present with Roy sitting there beside her, his arm around her waist, and his breath upon her cheek. She could not be sorry that it was so. Roy was to her what Charlie never could have been, and when he bade her say again how much she loved him she told him without reserve, and how her love, or rather her interest in him, had dated back to an earlier period than he supposed.

While they sat there, too much absorbed in each other to heed the lapse of time, or hear the bell which Aunt Letty in her impatience had used as a reminder of dinner, that worthy spinster herself suddenly appeared before them, her brow clouded and her mouth puckered up in the peculiar fashion which Edna knew was indicative of displeasure.

Aunt Letitia's first act after Roy had left the house in quest of Edna was to unhitch the rein of the horse standing at the gate, her second to give it water and handfuls of the tall grass growing near. Kindness to animals was a part of her nature, and nothing which had life was ever in danger of being ill-used where she was, unless it were a child. For children she had not a great deal of love; but where animals were concerned it was a different matter, so she tended Roy's horse and patted its neck, but when she saw how high it threw its head at first, and how it shrank from her, she said:

"Poor critter! I know by the way you act that your keeper abuses you. No horse kindly used is ever as nervous as that. The wretch! I wish I had him by the nape of the neck!"

When the horse was looked after, the dame went to the kitchen, with thoughts intent on dinner.

Everything was done at last. The baked tomatoes were browned just right; the pudding was white, creamy, and sweet; the custard was delicious, and the coffee sent a fragrant odour through the house; but the guests did not come. She had rung the bell, and at last she started herself for the delinquents, whom she found—just as she expected to find them—very close to each other, with Roy's arm around her niece, whose head was on his shoulder, and who looked the very image of happiness.

"I have found her, you see, and she has promised to live with me always. She is to be my wife, if you do not object."

"Umph! a pretty time of day to ask if I object, after it's all out and dried, and dinner spoiling. Didn't you hear the bell I rang an hour ago?"

Both culprits pleaded guilty, and both made haste to follow Miss Letitia, who never spoke again until the house was reached, and, contrary to her prediction, she found that the pie was not spoiled, though she insisted that it would have been better half an hour before.

Roy did ample justice to her dinner, which he pronounced the best he had ever eaten.

By the time dinner was over, Aunt Letty was ready to hear Roy on the subject uppermost in his mind. He loved Edna; he wanted her for his wife; and wished to know if Miss Pepper had any objections to the match.

"It's most too late to urge them if I have," Aunt Letty said. "No, I have no objections. If she must marry, and I suppose she must, I'd as soon she'd have you as anybody. Every pound she paid me I put into the bank in her name, and added another to it, so that she has now as good as a thousand laid up. I shall give her another thousand, too; and I want it secured to her and her heirs for ever."

"Oh, auntie, how kind you have been to me, when I thought, sometimes, you did not care," Edna said. The money in the bank was new to her, and she felt the tears rush into her eyes as she thought how she had misjudged her aunt. As for Roy, he could scarcely repress a smile at the woman's eagerness to have the two thousand pounds settled on Edna beyond his reach, but he promised to see that it was done, then said it was also his intention to give his bride, out-and-out, such a sum as would make her independent in case of his dying insolvent, a catastrophe, by the way, which he did not anticipate. When he asked for an early day, and named Christmas as the time when he hoped Edna would come to him, Aunt Letty demurred.

"It is not decent," she said, "and does not show proper respect for that dead woman with the boy's name."

Roy reassured her on that point by telling her what Georgie's wish had been, and she gave way at last, but her face wore a very forbidding look, and reminded Edna of the days when she used to cut carpet-rags up in the back chamber. Roy could not tear himself from Edna that night, so he found a boy who was willing to drive his horse back to the hotel where he would spend the night, and he proposed to return on foot the following day. This done, he made himself thoroughly at home in Aunt Letty's house, and interested himself in whatever he saw interested her. First, however, he wrote to his mother that he had found Edna, and that she would accompany him home within a few days.

"You will like her," he wrote. "She is a pretty little creature, and will be a great acquisition to our family circle. I need not bespeak a welcome for her, I am sure, for you will receive her as a daughter, I know, and love her with a mother's love."

He wished to surprise his mother, and to see the look of joy on her face when he introduced Edna to her. It was rather late when he retired, and he would not have gone when he did if Aunt Letty had not told him it was long after her bedtime, and she shouldn't sit up any longer for anybody. Roy felt that he would gladly have dispensed with her company, and enjoyed himself quite as well knowing she was in the bedroom adjoining, sleeping the sleep of the just; but he refrained from giving expression to his thoughts, and, taking the lamp she brought him, went to his room at the end of the hall.

Meantime Edna had been longing for some expression of sympathy from her aunt. Her heart was so full of happiness that she wanted to share it with some one, to talk with some one, with a woman who ought to know something how she felt; and, after Roy had said good night, she drew a little stool to her aunt's side, and, laying her head in her lap, as she had never laid it before, said to her:

"Auntie, have you no word of congratulation for me? Are you not glad because I am so happy, oh, so much happier than I ever thought I could be, when—"

Here she stopped abruptly, feeling that she was treading on dangerous ground; but her aunt took up the unfinished sentence and said:

"When you lived with me, and I made a little slave of you; that's what you mean. Don't spoil a story for relations' sake. I was hard on you at times; but, Edna," and the voice began to tremble, "I never meant to be bad. I didn't understand children, or that they could grow up to be a comfort as I know now you would be, and since you have come back I've thought how nice it would be to have you live with me, and now he's come and you'll go with him, and the old woman will be all alone again, all alone."

There was a pitiful sound in Aunt Letty's voice, and it brought the tears at once to Edna's eyes, but before she could speak Aunt Letty went on:

"I am glad for you, child; it's the ordained way to marry, and you've a good man, I believe, and you'll be happy with him. You think, of course, Aunt Letitia doesn't know what it is to love, but I do. I was nearer once to being married than you are now—so near that the day was set and my wedding dress was made, and my hot temper got the better of me, and we quarrelled about a trivial thing, and I wouldn't yield an inch, and got so angry at last that I vowed I'd never marry him, and I never have, and we have lived our lives alone, he in his way, I in mine."

"Oh, auntie, I never suspected such a thing; and he is living yet, you say. Maybe some time—you'll—"

"No, we sha'n't," Aunt Letty said, quickly. "ain't so foolish as that. We have not met in thirty years. I was young then, and not bad looking either; now I'm old and wrinkled and hard and gray, and he is old and fat I have no doubt. No, child, don't build castles for me. Be happy yourself and I am satisfied."

She stroked Edna's hair softly for a moment, then abruptly, but kindly said:

"There, now, you've got what you wanted, be

off to bed. Don't you see it is going on to twelve o'clock?"

So Edna left her with a good-night kiss, which was suffered but not returned, and stole up to her room there to muse over her own great happiness, and to think of the story Aunt Letty had told her of her own early love affair, which terminated so disastrously. Who and where was the man? she asked herself, without ever a thought of the truth, and while speculating upon it and thinking how strange it seemed that Aunt Letty was ever young and had a lover like herself, she fell asleep and dreamed that the lover was Mr. Freeman Barton.

CHAPTER XLV.

Roy had written to his mother on Thursday, and she received his letter on Saturday as she sat in her pleasant sitting-room, feeling very lonely and desolate, and missing her late companion more than she did Roy.

"It is strange how she has grown into my love, and how much she is to me. I am nothing without her," she said softly to herself as she felt that her dress was not quite as it should be and her hair somewhat awry.

She had depended altogether upon Miss Overton to care for her personal appearance, and felt her absence more sensibly for it.

"A letter, ma'am," her maid said, bringing it in and placing it in her hand.

Mrs. Churchill felt sure that Roy, who knew how dependent for eyes she was upon those about her, had written nothing which a third person might not see, so she asked her maid to read it, and listened with a strange feeling to what Roy had written of Edna.

"Thanks; that will do; you may go now," she said to her maid, who went out and left her alone.

Roy would be there on Monday night, and with him the girl for whom he had asked a mother's love, Edna, Charlie's wife.

"Poor Charlie," she whispered to herself, and tried to believe that the tears which rolled down her cheeks were prompted by sorrow for him, instead of sorrow for the fact that Edna was found and was coming there to live. "I mean to be glad, and I am glad. I am going to like her, and I do like her," she said to herself; but she did not sleep much that night, and nearly all the next day she sat out by Charlie's grave, trying by thinking of him and his love for Edna Browning to awaken a feeling of genuine affection in her own breast.

But she could not do it. The most she could effect was a determination to be very kind to the girl, and to make it as pleasant for her as possible. To this end she gave orders that the largest and best sleeping-room in the house should be prepared for her on Monday, and as far as her sight would admit gave it her personal inspection.

"If it was only Miss Overton coming to-night how happy I should be," she said, after all was done, and the day nearly gone as she sat down by the fire kindled in the library to wait for the travellers.

It was very quiet and desolate sitting there alone, and she fell asleep at last, and did not hear the carriage when it went to the station nor when it returned. It was Roy who aroused her by putting both his arms round her and kissing her forehead lovingly.

"Wake up, mother," he said, and there was a ring of some great joy in the tone of his voice. "Wake up, mother; I have brought Edna to you. Here she is—right here, mother; let me put her hand in yours, and see if you have ever felt one like it."

Roy was greatly excited, and something of his nervousness communicated itself to his mother, who trembled like a leaf, and whose sight seemed dimmer than ever as she turned her eyes towards the little figure, the rustle of whose dress she heard, and whose hands took hers in their own and held them fast, while a voice which thrilled through every nerve of the excited woman said: "Mother, dear mother, Charlie's mother and mine—the only one I ever knew! You liked me, I know, as Miss Overton; will you love me as Edna, and forgive the deception?"

Mrs. Churchill was pale as death, and for an instant could not speak; but she held close to the soft hands and bent her face down over the young girl who had knelt before her and whose head was in her lap.

"What is it? How is it? I do not understand at all. Roy, tell me what it means. You bring me one you say is Edna, Charlie's wife; and she calls me mother with Miss Overton's voice. Is it, can it be they are the same—that the girl I already love as my daughter is really mine?"

"Yes, mother, really yours in more senses than one," Roy said; then, as briefly as possible, he told Edna's story; why she had come to them in disguise, how he had loved her even when pledged to another, and that she had promised to love him in return and was to be his wife.

"Oh, I am so glad, so glad! Kiss me, Edna," Mrs. Churchill said, adopting the new name at once,

and holding her daughter to her in an embrace which assured Roy that all was well between his mother and his future wife. "You would think me foolish if you knew how I did dread your coming here," Mrs. Churchill said to Edna, when she was a little composed and could talk about the matter calmly. "I was afraid it would not be so pleasant for Miss Overton and myself to have a third party here, but I am so glad now, so glad!"

Her face showed how glad she was, and she could hardly bear to have Edna leave her during the entire day.

"It is so nice to have you back, and to know you will never go again," she said; then Edna told her of her promise to Aunt Letty to return to Allen's Hill, and remain there for a time at least before her marriage.

"She has some claim on me; she is all alone, and I must do so much for her," Edna said, while Mrs. Churchill did feel a little chill when she thought of the woman with the dreadful name who had written so familiarly to her and who was Edna's aunt and had a claim on her.

But she loved the niece well enough to tolerate the aunt, and even suggested that the latter should come there if she wished for her niece's society. But Edna knew this would never do, and persisted in her plan of returning to the Hill after a few days at Leighton and a flying visit to Uncle Philip. The servants were next called together and the news told to them, and received with many expressions of wonder and pleasure. Russell alone was not surprised, and astonished both Edna and his master by telling them that he had known Charlie's wife from the first, but had kept his own counsel, as it was not for him to interfere.

Mrs. Barton, who called next day, received the intelligence quite as well as could be expected. The fact that George had known who Edna was, and had even spoken to Roy about her, and given her consent, went a long way towards reassuring her. What George sanctioned was right, and she kissed Edna kindly, and cried over her a good deal, and said she should like her for George's sake, and hoped she would try to fill poor George's place in Roy's heart, and be a comfort to Mrs. Churchill. Roy certainly looked as if he was satisfied with matters as they were, as did his mother also, and everything seemed working for the happiness of all. In order to keep Edna with them as long as possible, Roy telegraphed for Uncle Philip to come to Leighton, and the next day's train brought the old man down, with his quaint sayings and original style of dress. He knew how it was going to end, so he was not surprised, and he wished Edna much joy, and congratulated Roy upon his good fortune in securing so great a happiness.

"The neatest, prettiest girl in the world, yes, yes; and Roy, Edna must be married from my house, and in my church. I claim that as my right. Never should have built the thing that's been such a plague to me if it had not been for Maude and Edna, and that sermon about the synagogue. Not that I'm sorry, though the bother has worried me thin. We've got a nice man, too, now; had him two weeks, and like him immensely. Don't mind Ruth Gardiner's flummery more than if she was a goat. Yes, yes, a good fellow, who speaks to everybody, slaps you on your back sometimes, and acts as if he liked the old man. He must marry Dotty. She'll be the first bride in the church, and I'll have it trimmed if it cost me my farm. Yes, Dot must go from my house."

Edna favoured this, and as Roy did not object it was arranged that, after a few weeks' stay with Aunt Letty, Edna should be married in Uncle Philip's church, which bore the name of St. Philip's.

Christmas was the very latest time of which Roy would hear. "George said I was not to wait," was the argument which he used with all, and which finally prevailed; so, after a week's stay at Leighton, Edna returned to Allen's Hill, accompanied by Roy, who, during the six weeks that she stayed there, spent nearly half his time there and on the road.

"He was as tickled as a boy with a new top, and sillier than them all," Aunt Letty said, but she liked him nevertheless, and paid him every possible attention; made rolls and muffins alternately because he liked them, used her best dishes every day, and even hired a little girl to wait upon the table when he was there, because he "was used to such fol-de-rols;" and it pleased Edna too.

Aunt Letty seemed greatly changed in more respects than one; and if uniform kindness and gentleness of manner could avail to blot out all remembrance of a past which had not been so pleasant, it was surely blotted from Edna's mind; and she felt only love and gratitude for the peculiar woman who stood upon the door-step and cried when at last the carriage, which was to take Roy and Edna to the train, drove away from her door, and left her all alone.

"Nobody now, Tabby, but you and I," Aunt Letty said as she re-entered her lonely house; and, taking her out in her arms, she cried like a child

over the dumb creature, which tried in so many ways to evince its appreciation of this unusual carous.

She had said it was doubtful whether she would go to the wedding or not; in fact, she didn't much believe she should; it would be cold and blustering, and she should get the "neurology" and be in the way; and nobody would miss an old woman like her. She should of course visit Edna once, any way, in her own house; but to the wedding she shouldn't go. This was her decision till the receipt of a certain letter which came to her within a few days after Edna's departure, and which changed her intentions at once:

"Don't be foolish, but come. I rather want to see if you look as bad as I do. P. O."

That was the letter, and it sent Aunt Letty to the glass, where she inspected herself for some little time, and decided that she was not very bad looking, and she'd show him that she was not, too! So she wrote to Edna that she had changed her mind and was coming to the wedding; then she went to the next town, and, having inquired for the most fashionable dressmaker and found it was Mrs. Baker, went to her at once, telling her whether she was going, and that she did not wish to disgrace her relations, asking also what she should get, and if Mrs. Baker would make it, and how much she would charge. The price staggered her a little, and made her stop for a moment before committing herself, but remembering a recent rise in stocks which had affected her, she determined to incur the expense, and when next she wrote to Edna she announced that she had a new black silk, which cost ten shillings a yard, making at Mrs. Baker's, and a gray morning dress, velvet cloak, and black alpaca for travelling, and that they were to be made in style, too, and she shouldn't shame any one. She did not add that she had also indulged in a handsome set of lace and furs, and even committed the extravagance of getting a chignon! This last article of fashion and luxury came near being the death of the poor old lady, who could not make it stay on without a whole box of pins, which stuck into her head, pulled her hair, and drove her nearly wild as she persisted in wearing it when alone so as to get used to it.

The chest upstairs, where the yellow satin and the faded wreath were lying, was visited more than once, and the good dame in her abstraction forgot to shut the lid, and when she went again to her Mecca found that Tabby had made the chest and its contents into a nice bed and playhouse for the two fat, pretty kittens which for three or four weeks had lived under the floor, and had only come out at intervals. The chest was looked after that and not visited again before Aunt Letty's departure with her new clothes and trunks. The dresses fitted admirably, especially the silk, which was elegant in its way, and trailed far behind the good dame, who thought it terrible, and who felt more at home in her short alpaca suit, which was made in fashion, with jaunty overskirt and saque, making her look fully ten years younger than her wont, and a few years younger than she really was. Some of the neighbours who enjoyed her outfit and the remarks she made concerning it suggested a round hat as a fitting accompaniment to her suit, but this Aunt Letty repelled with disdain, hoping she was not so foolish as to put her old face under a round hat, not she. She had a nice velvet bonnet, for which she had paid that Miss Backus the 'dominable price of twenty shillings; she should wear that, and her thread-lace veil—which she did, looking so nice and stylish that Edna, who was waiting for her at the station, did not recognise her at first, and looked twice at the comely and fashionably dressed woman, holding so fast to her ticket, which the collector was trying to get from her.

"Why, auntie," she cried, when a turn of the twenty-shilling velvet bonnet showed her Miss Pepper's face, "how nice and pretty and young you look. I did not know you at first."

"Fine feathers make fine birds" was Aunt Letty's reply, but she did not look ill-pleased with her niece's compliment as she followed her to the little pony-carriage in waiting, and which Edna had driven down herself.

"Is this his—Mr. Overton's, I mean?" Aunt Letty asked, in some surprise; for Edna's accounts of Bobtail and the square-backed buggy did not quite tally with this stylish turn-out.

Edna explained, blushing, that it was her own—a gift from Roy.

"Love in the tub, just now; but wait till by-and-bye," Aunt Letty said.

But Edna had no fears of the by-and-bye; and her face was radiant with happiness as she drove her aunt through the main street, and turned in the direction of Uncle Philip's.

(To be continued.)

It is now anticipated that the Queen's Robing Room, which has been completed for some considerable time past, will be open to the public the first Saturday in the new year.

THE LONDON READER AND LIFE AND FASHION.

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NOTICES TO CORRESPONDENTS.

J. C.'s verses are declined with thanks.

JUANITA.—1. The verses are pretty, pathetic, but feeble withal. 2. The handwriting is very good.

G. R. S.—1. The handwriting is very good. 2. The lines do you great credit; they require, however, a few emendations, particularly in the fourth and ninth verses.

MARY ANN (Gateshead).—Take as much exercise and as little sleep as possible. Avoid sugar, and take only a small allowance of tea, coffee, and other liquids.

W. C. (Belmont).—The mysterious effusion by our esteemed and constant correspondent, bearing the title of "First Love," does not, we regret to say, meet with our approval.

M. A.—Take a little more exercise in the open air, avoid stimulants and excitement, and observe great regularity in the time of taking food. The diet should be simple, ample, yet moderate.

JAMES W.—We do not see the name of such a vessel in the list. If you are correct in your dates, you have scarcely given time for a letter to arrive. We presume the ship was without steam power.

M. JOURAVLEV.—1. A young lady under twenty-one is a minor, and by law the consent of parents or guardians is required to the marriage of minors. 2. The handwriting is very good.

BESSIE.—You should apply to the Cancer Hospital for advice. The discovery referred to is doubtless known to the authorities there. Your case must be inspected before remedies can be prescribed. Probably it will be necessary for you to undergo an operation. You should lose no time.

A. CONSTANT SUBSCRIBER.—The second wife of a man has no legal liability in reference to the children of her husband's first wife. It is different in the case of a husband, who can be compelled by the parish authorities to contribute to the support of the children of any woman whom he may marry.

YOUNG APPRENTICE (Salford).—There are some engravings of a stationary condensing beam steam-engine, and its various parts, in "Lardner's Rudimentary Treatise on the Steam-engine," which can be purchased for a shilling. The engine referred to is a sixty-horse power condensing engine, constructed for working cotton-mills.

CHARLES W.—The girl can obtain an affiliation order for both children if she is prepared with the necessary evidence. The payments that the putative father has made on account of the first child are evidence against him to that extent, and will prevent him pleading the lapse of time. If you intend to bring the case before a magistrate you should do so without further delay.

WARNING.—1. In time of peace the lowest height is 5 ft. 10 in., unless the applicant be a growing youth. There is no standard for weight. 2. Wash your head frequently with a mixture composed of lime-water and vinegar. To a pint of water add two ounces of fresh quick-lime. Let it stand for a dozen hours, then pour the water off clear from sediment, and add a quarter of a pint of vinegar.

EMILIE.—1. A clean brush and some fine spirit varnish are the only materials required. These can be procured at an oilman's or at an artists' colour warehouse. 2. You are not too young to marry. You should not lightly abandon your parents' consent, which is often accompanied with a blessing and is always an additional ingredient to a young lady's happiness. If you can procure this, and consider that your lover earns sufficient money to pay the expenses of a modest home, we should advise you to marry without delay.

R. R. O.—You have no present right to the property. Your father had power to dispose of it by his will, and under that will it passed to your mother. Her second husband has some right to it which would temporarily or entirely supersede yours according to the precise form which the property assumed when the division took place. Several questions would arise were an attempt made to obtain possession of the share, which could only be answered by those who were in a position to inspect the title-deeds and other deeds of settlement which may have been made. According to your statement, however, the right to the share in question does not rest in you.

J. C.—Brass is manufactured by melting together copper and zinc. The proportions are usually two parts of the former to one of the latter. But brass for various purposes is made of different proportions of these two metals, the rule being that the density is intensified with the increase of the proportion of copper. The metals when mixed are placed in earthen crucibles, which are subjected

to the heat of a furnace for seven or eight hours. Powdered charcoal is placed in the crucible previously to the latter being put in the furnace. After the furnace has done its work the metal is poured out into granite moulds for plate brass, and into cast-iron moulds for bar brass.

MINNIE (Hereford).—The description is attractive, and doubtless, if published, would cause some hearts to beat a little faster than usual. We do not say that you should reject a very eligible suitor if fortune should place such a one in your way, but yet you should hesitate before you marry at your early age. Marriage has its duties as well as its pleasures, and the most obvious of those duties falls too heavily upon the slender frame of sweet seventeen. Yours may be an exceptional case, but it is generally advisable for young ladies to wait until they are twenty-one or thereabouts.

H. G. E. (Yale).—The inconvenience of which you complain would be in some measure obviated if you availed yourself of the system of post-office orders, which has been extended to the colonies. Perhaps also the blame of the non-arrival of the newspapers may, in a few instances, attach to your friend's insufficiency of direction or inattention to the regulations laid down. We take the liberty of suggesting this because our experience of the post-office differs from yours. In a somewhat extended correspondence with many of the colonies, we rarely find that a newspaper or a letter miscarries either way.

UNA.—The appearance of the forehead and the contour of the face are wanting in your description. The features seem to possess the elements of beauty. At so early an age it is preferable to think of domestic duties and school books before sweethearts. If, however, some nice young gentleman should salute you with an honest kiss, you might return it upon three conditions: 1st. If you like him well enough to do so; 2nd. If you think, at the same time, what a very great deal you have to learn before you can be married; 3rd. If you tell your mamma of the occurrence before you go to bed. The maxim, "Never kiss and tell," does not apply to very young ladies.

THE HOUSE UPON THE SAND.

I built my house in early days,
While walking in youth's hopeful ways;
While mad ambition fired my soul,
And passions brooked no stern control.

I built my mansion grand and high;
I feared no ill, I knew not why;
I raised up story upon story,
To add unto the builder's glory!

But one dark night the tempest raged,
The elements their warfare waged;
And my grand dwelling, built for show,
Was laid, in shattered ruin, low!

I gazed, in anguish and afright,
Upon the desolating sight!
I might have known it would not stand—
My house was built upon the sand!

Young man, take warning by my fate,
And look about you ere too late!
Defy the storm and tempest's shock;
Build, build your house upon a rock!

M. A. K.

MINNIE.—You need not be surprised or distressed that the grief is so poignant and harder to bear now than it was at the time the bereavement occurred. It is often so. Then all your energies were strained to afford what comfort and solace it was in your power to give to the departing one, and as you wished that his spirit should be calm and brave under the trial, so you tuned your own kind heart in that fashion and your love strengthened you for the task. The strength continued as long as any of his wishes remained to be performed, and in his work you forgot your own sorrow. Only when that work was done did the sense of your own desolation supervene. This is all as it should be, all quite natural. Do not cherish your grief, do not indulge in morbid fancies that you did not grieve enough at the time of death. You worked in all sorts of ways, which was far more noble, and you must by undertaking some new work try to forget the great sorrow of which you now complain. Work is the best panacea for most of the evils under the sun.

LOVELY BESSIE.—There does not appear to be any reason why you should return the locket. If you sent an appropriate answer to the last letter you received, you have done all in your power, and therefore may allow the matter to rest. Your views will not be forwarded by any expressions which will show that your feelings have been wounded. If suffering unhappily ensue, you will by-and-by be thankful if you are able to suffer in silence; perhaps, while combating with the silent anguish, some grains of solid comfort and wisdom will be given to you. You may learn the worthlessness of a character which has abused your confidence, the folly of allowing the substance to drop from your grasp while you aimed at a shadow, and that a searcher for constancy should herself be true.

R. S.—We like your letters better than we like your poetry. Your observations concerning "genius" are correct, but the genius that can conceive merely, that can light up its own fancy, yet is without power to convey to others the brilliant and pathetic visions by which it believes itself to be influenced, is perhaps the genius of a dreamer and nothing more. Some such thoughts occur to us as we peruse your latest production. The subjects are well chosen, here and there peep out traces of good, noble, and exalted feeling, which excite attention, and are then succeeded by a banalising disappointment at certain modes of expression which are as obscure as they are inartistic. The pieces have all the qualities of a bright, happy, yet confused dream. Thus they would fail to interest any who have not watched your laborious perseverance, and who have not the opportunity of considering the amusement afforded by pleasant mental efforts to an enfeebled frame. None the less happy is the man who has "kept his memory green," and whose sick couch is enlivened by imaginings the basis of which is a reverent and tender love.

NETTA.—In all probability the gentleman loves you as much as it is in his power to love. Evidently he has not

the capacity for a very large share of that passion, or he would not have attempted to make love by deputy. His irresolution is lamentable, especially at the tolerably mature age of eight-and-twenty. We suspect that you don't care very much for him, and that he has sufficient shrewdness to perceive this. Thus wounded vanity and irresolution have plunged him into a sorry plight, out of which neither you nor your mamma seem disposed to help him. If it should so happen that he does not come to his senses and run away, or if it be possible for any emotions of pity to enter your breast, or if upon consideration it may appear to you that after all, he is not such a very bad individual, that he may do in default of a better whose advent is not at all likely,—in any or all of these cases you might spur up the sides of his intent by means of a small specimen of your own handwriting, in which only the following words should be traced:

He either fears his fate too much,
Or his deserts are small,
Who fears to put it to the touch,
And win or lose it all.

VIOLET EVANS, twenty-three, tall, and ladylike: Respondent must be kind-hearted, about thirty, and one who would be constant and true.

LIZZIE and KATELEEN.—"Lizzie," twenty-five, tall, fair, and a good figure. "Kateleen," sixteen, dark, pretty, and entitled to money when of age. Respondents must be in the army.

PRESBYTERIAN, twenty, rather short, fair, good tempered, loving, and in a good position. Respondent must be rather short, with a loving, quiet disposition, and about seventeen.

FLYING CLOUD, thirty-two, 5 ft. 6 in., brown hair, blue eyes, able to keep a wife and make a home happy, and in the Navy. Respondent must be fond of home, good tempered, and about twenty-seven years of age.

H. R., twenty-five, 5 ft. 6 in., fair, good looking, and a seaman in the Navy. Respondent must be from twenty to twenty-five, good looking, domesticated, and fond of home.

CLARISSE, twenty-one, petite, ladylike, accomplished, and accustomed to good society. Respondent must be a tall, good-looking, dark gentleman, age not much object after twenty-five, be well off, and drive either a brougham or mail phaeton.

CONSTANTINE, thirty-three, medium height, light whiskers, and moustache, of good address, and anxious to settle in life; position and prospects good. Respondent should be a dark-eyed, merry-hearted, and affectionate little girl, from twenty-five to thirty, fond of music and home, and have a little money of her own.

W. W., whose delicate health renders it necessary for him to constantly travel, and occasionally on the Continent, wishes to meet with a sympathetic and devoted lady, between twenty and thirty years of age, with tastes suitable to his circumstances; an orphan or young widow preferred. He is thirty-six, with ample means.

ROSEBUD, PAVET, and VIOLET.—"Rosebud," twenty-two, short, dark brown hair, hazel eyes, good tempered, and domesticated. "Pavet," twenty, medium height, brown hair, gray eyes, stout, and good looking. "Violet," eighteen, tall, fair, blue eyes, golden hair, amiable, and fond of music and dancing. Each has a small income. Respondents must be respectably connected.

COMMUNICATIONS RECEIVED:

LOVELY FRED is responded to by—"Eva," medium height, fair, short curly hair, good looking, good tempered, speaks French and German fluently, fond of dancing, and capable of making a home happy.—"Annie R.," tall, fair, pretty, and of a loving disposition.—"May," twenty-three, tall, fair complexion, dark hair and eyes, domesticated, loving, fond of singing, and can play the piano.—"Nellie May," rather tall, light hair, gray eyes, very loving, fond of dancing and singing, domesticated, and a tradesman's daughter.—"Lily," tall, fair, good looking, affectionate, attentive, and plays and sings very nicely.—"Mary S.," fair, loving, fond of home, and would make a good wife to one that would return her love.—"Nellie C.," rather dark, tall, amiable disposition, has an income of 200 l. per annum, and would make a loving and affectionate wife.

D. M. C. by—"R. S. B.," short, fair, good tempered, loving, and would make a home happy.

G. A. by—"R. B. H.," twenty, a good cook, washer, and ironer, good looking, gentle in appearance, and would make a home happy.

ROBIN by—"Edith Annie," petite, dark eyes, long dark hair, of the requisite age, good looking, and a Protestant—will send cards in exchange for Robin's; and—"Emily," seventeen, tall, dark, pretty, loving, and a Protestant.

Laura and Alice by—"Frank and George." The former, twenty-one, dark, affectionate, fond of home and music; the latter, twenty-three, 5 ft. 8 in., fair, hazel-eyed, and fond of music.

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Also, the TITLE and INDEX to VOL. XV. Price One Penny.

NOTICE.—Part 91, for DECEMBER, Now Ready, price 7d., containing Steel Plate Engraving, coloured by hand, of the latest Fashions, with large Supplement Sheet of the Fashions for DECEMBER.

N.B.—CORRESPONDENTS MUST ADDRESS THEIR LETTERS TO THE EDITOR OF "THE LONDON READER," 334, Strand, W.C.

†† We cannot undertake to return Rejected Manuscripts. As they are sent to us voluntarily, authors should retain copies.

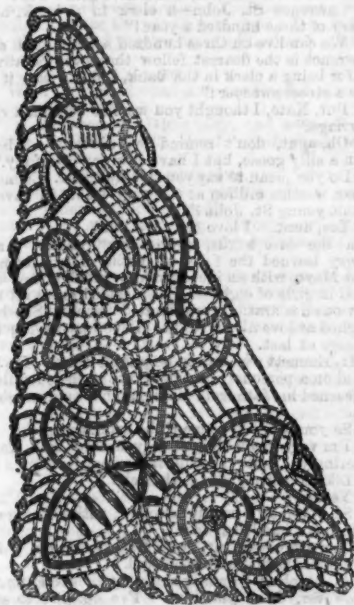
POINT LACE COLLARS, STAND FOR BOTTLES, KNITTED BOOT, &c.

POINT LACE COLLARS.—Nos. 1 & 3.

PROCURE the design on linen, and sew on the contours as shown in No. 3, filling up all interstices with embroidery stitch, using fine thread for the purpose. No. 1 is worked in pretty much the same manner. Fill up the interstices with guipure thread and embroidery stitch.

STAND FOR BEER BOTTLES.—No. 2.

THESE stands are of polished wire; they are to



POINT LACE COLLAR.—No. 1.

receive four bottles. The stand is covered with brown Java canvas, as seen in illustration; stretch over this threads of lambswool lengthways, and cross them on the slant with yellow corded silk. The interstices are filled with embroidery of red lambswool and black corded silk. The handle is covered with black and red silk cord. Tassels composed of the same silk complete the ornamentation.

KNITTED BOOT.—No. 4.

THE knitted boot shown in illustration No. 4 is intended for a gentleman; but as over-boots for the sake of warmth, they are well suited for ladies, either at church, in paying visits, or attending concerts or theatres.

The principal abbreviation used in this description is s for stitch.

Begin at the sole, setting on 136 s in black lambswool. Four knitting needles are used. The 136 s divided into quarters give 34, and worked in the round, the whole proceeds as in stocking knitting.

Knit *, 4 rounds right, then in 4 rounds alternately 4 s right, 4 s left, and repeat from *. Taking off begins with the 6th round as follows: The last s of the second needle and the first s of the third needle are knitted together; then one round straight.

8th round.—*, the s formed of the 2 s of round 6 knitted together with both of the following seven, then one round plain; then, taking off, repeat from * till 89 s are completed. Then knit together in the following round 2 s instead of 3 s. Taking off in the

middle of the foot, so as to imitate a seam is ended here. Then to improve the fit of the boot, knit together the 2 last s, next 2 s right, 2 s knitted together to the right, 1 s right. Turn the work, and going back, take up the last knitted s, 9 s left, 2 s knitted to the left, 1 s left. Turn the work and knit to the right; on both sides knit to the right, and 1 additional s to the right. Turn the work and in similar manner knit to the left, and so on.

Now follows the upper row.—2 right, 2 left. In our illustration there are 24 rounds, but the boot can be lengthened if desirable. Red lambswool is pre-

ferable as lining, and would consist of a double boot. It is advisable to employ the shoemaker for the sole.

FASHIONS.

TRIMMINGS FOR CLOAKS, &c.

THE handsomest velvet cloaks are heavily braided with fine soutache in palm-leaf designs. The leaf is not merely outlined by braid in the old-fashioned way, but is filled in with curled, fancifully arranged braid as closely as if embroidered, making a rich and elegant garniture. The edge of the garment is then fringed. Passementerie, made in imitation of this braiding, consist of small cords fastened together to show thick leaves and vines. These are very effective on velvet, silk, and cashmere. Jet balls, amidst ornaments for sashes and on frog-loops, are among the novelties. Thick bits of jet—not beads, but square blocks—are intermingled in French trimmings. Large buttons, with velvet centre and passementerie borders, are used for cloth cloaks. Frog-loops of



STAND FOR BOTTLES.—No. 2.

passementerie are for velvets. Three are always used, and often four.

A great deal of guipure lace is worn this season, especially for cashmere and silk, though there is nothing so handsome for velvet as Chantilly thread lace. The pointed leaf figure still prevails in guipure. German guipures, hand-made and pure silk, but silk of inferior quality, are far cheaper than those made in France. These are most used for cashmere. The laces used for velvet cloaks are three or four inches wide, and are in guipure and English lace thread



KNITTED BOOT.—No. 4.

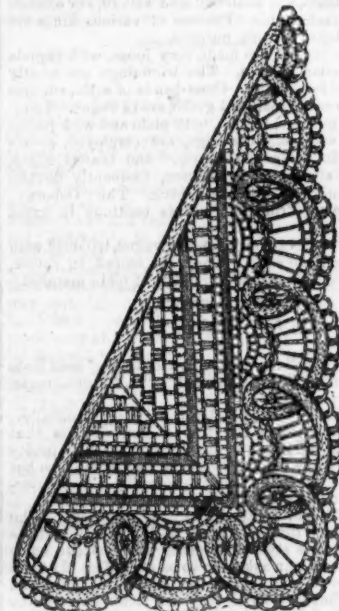
—real thread and hand-made. French thread lace, called Chantilly, is finer than any other, and very expensive. It is the custom this season to sew on lace above the edge of the garment, and without fullness. Passementerie is the usual heading. Lace sashes are also shown.

Fur will be much worn this season. Of course sable is preferable to all other furs, but bands of black marten will be considered very stylish. Bands of ostrich feathers are less used for velvet cloaks than they were last winter, but will be retained for gros grain and cashmere.

For cloth garments bias velvet, heavy gros grain, and gros de Londres, with fringes, are the trimmings. Velvet does not trim cashmere effectively—we cannot tell why, but know that it does not.

SHAWLS.

STRIPED shawls are greatly worn; plaids are second choice. The shawl is square, folded double, and drawn straight round the shoulders like a scarf. These are for morning and for travelling, and are worn for comfort more than style. Those with broad black and white stripes will answer with most suits; but the handsomest are gay Roman stripes on scarlet or white grounds. These are twilled or repped Scotch wool, very soft and fine. A carriage shawl—a sort



POINT LACE COLLAR.—No. 3.

of family affair—has one side gray, for elderly ladies, and the reverse side in bright plush stripes, for younger folks.

A new and graceful over garment, made of a square shawl without cutting, has a black velvet vest and collar. The back is a pretty draped panier and cape, and is fastened by two bows of velvet. Shawl costumes have used up all the pretty gray and brown shawls, and have become too common to be desirable. The woven woullen sacque has taken the place of burnouses.

FASHIONS FOR JANUARY.

THE early approach of cold weather has tended materially to decide the adoption of winter costumes, and very warm materials have not only become fashionable, but quite necessary.

Velvet, satin, silk, drap d'Italie, drap de soie, satteen, serge, and rep are all employed in costumes, which generally consist of trimmed skirt, panier, and jacket. Skirts are made just touching the ground,

and pointed bodices with square basques at the back are quite fashionable. The sleeves of jackets are made open and pointed, and these costumes are usually trimmed with deep fringe. Basques and revers continue in favour.

Evening dresses are made of a medium length, and are trimmed with flounces and rounded paniers, not puffed as formerly, with trimming to match the dress. A square tablier, placed high in the front, is sometimes added. Bodices are worn rather higher than formerly.

Japanese poplin in sky-blue, pink, light green, and white are employed for evening dresses and ball costumes. Also white grenadines trimmed with green, rose, grenat, or blue; lavender grenadines, trimmed with white lace, etc.

The Maintenon and Lamballe fichus are still in favour.

Pleated and gathered flounces, bouillonnés, fringes, and bands of satin and velvet are employed in the ornamentation of outdoor costumes. Skirts are sometimes trimmed with a single deep flounce, headed with a band, and also with a single bouillonné, edged at top and bottom with a band or flounce. Velvet costumes are richly braided and ornamented. Cloth, serge, and rep costumes are trimmed in various styles

with satin braiding, passementerie, and velvet. Dark green, marine blue, and grenat are the favourite shades.

Casques, mantles, and jackets in velvet are very much worn. Fitting casques, with open sleeves, are trimmed with a deep flounce of satin or with lace. The basques are trimmed in the same way. Mantles are made very loose, slashed three times behind, or at the centre and sides, with wide open sleeves. They are trimmed with small cross bands of satin, which are repeated at the sleeves. Edgings of fur, seal, chinchilla, sable, ermine, and grebe are very extensively used. Astracan is also sometimes worn. A deep band of these materials is frequently placed at the bottom of the sleeve, with a deep collar of the same. Velvet mantles trimmed with grebe and sable, plain sealskin, and cloth trimmed with fur or ermine, are very fashionable. Fringes of various kinds are also employed for this purpose.

Jackets in cloth are made very loose, with pagoda and Venetian sleeves. The trimmings are mostly those used for mantles. Cross-bands of satin, edgings of fur, ermine, seal, and grebe, are in vogue. Trimmings in guipure, fringes, both plain and with passementerie and tassel headings, are employed, as are also silk flouncings with fringed and headed edges. They are always made à revers, frequently double-headed, and with slits in the back. The "Osborne" and "Crown Princess" jackets continue in great favour.

Velvet tunics are still much in vogue, trimmed with lace, fringe, and satin. They are looped on panier, and are worn over flounced skirts of plain material.

KATE MAYO.

"I don't believe in love in a cottage," said Kate Mayo, looking defiantly round. "I, for one, mean to marry riches!"

"Oh, Kate!" cried Helen Dewey, reproachfully. Miss Mayo shook the tiny golden ringlets that hung like spirals of sunshine over her pretty forehead, while a mischievous sparkle came into her blue eyes; she rather seemed to enjoy the consternation she had created.

"Well," said Kate Mayo, "I mean it. Who wants to be a drudge, in an ill-fitting calico dress and last year's style of bonnet, just because some idiotic young man asks you to be his wife? My taste is for thread-lace shawls and moiré antiques, and bonnets that look as if they had floated across the sea on a Parisian zephyr! Moreover, I have a fancy for fine houses and a chocolate-coloured brougham, and a box at the opera, and a French maid. Oh, I tell you, girls, my husband must be rich!"

Kate Mayo spoke as if fate were at her own command, as if she were crowned queen of her destiny. So she was, in so far as wit and beauty and a certain royalty of self-possession may constitute the sceptre of one's own existence. Tall and gracefully formed as a Greek statue, her loveliness took you as it were by storm. She was fair as the waxen leaf of a white rose, with pure, straight features, cheeks just tinted with the faint, delicate pink that comes and goes like a fleeting shadow, and a little ripe mouth that made one think of the crimson sugar hearts that little children delight in. Kate had been sent up from the old farm to see what a winter in London would do for her in the way of a life establishment; and Kate had some very decided ideas of her own upon the all-important subject.

"My dear," said Aunt Dewey, solemnly, "all this sounds very mercenary!"

"I can't help it, aunt," was Kate's rejoinder. "I am mercenary."

"At your age, Kate?"

"What difference does age make, I wonder?" said the beauty, with a petulant shrug of her shoulders. "I'm going in for diamonds and a tour on the Continent. Sentiment is very well in a novel, but in real life it doesn't work."

Aunt Dewey's expression of horror only made Kate Mayo laugh.

Miss Mayo was decidedly a "success" in the brilliant circles of society that winter. It was not entirely her faultless beauty, nor her quick readiness of repartee, nor yet the bewitching confidence with which she seemed to take the world's favour for granted, but a mixture and mingling of all three—a something which could hardly be expressed, save by the word "fascination." But notwithstanding her triumphs, Kate Mayo had, as yet, made no election in life.

"My dear," said Aunt Dewey, solemnly, "what was the reason you refused Harry Pelham?"

"The reason? Why, aunt, he's a Custom-house clerk as poor as Job's cat."

"Kate! what a very inelegant comparison!"

"As a church mouse, then, ma'am, if you like that better."

"Mr. Ryerson, then?" pursued Mrs. Dewey.

"I've no idea of coming to the workhouse before my time."

"Mr. Ryerson is well off, I'm sure."

"The positive degree won't suit me, aunt; I must have the superlative!"

"Kate, you will die an old maid yet!"

"Better an old maid, aunt, than a careworn old wife."

Aunt Dewey shook her head.

"Kate! Kate! there is such a thing as going through the woods and picking up a crooked stick. What do you value yourself at, pray?"

"Twenty thousand pounds at least, aunt, and from that upwards," laughed Kate as she put the last rose into the vase of flowers she was arranging.

"Where will you get such a price as that?"

"Not in society just now, to be sure, aunt, but its representative will be here yet."

"Whom do you mean?"

"I mean Mr. Emmett."

Aunt Dewey sat down with uplifted hands and eyes.

"What! the millionaire of St. Augustine's Place?"

"Yes, aunt."

"But he is on the Continent."

"N'importe—he is coming home soon."

"You have never seen him?"

"I daresay I shall see him."

"Kate, you are crazy!"

"No, I'm not, aunt; you yourself will own it when you see me Mrs. Emmett!"

The audacity of the girl fairly bewildered her sage relative; it was as if a little French grisette had aspired to share the august throne of the Napoleons!

"Well, I never did!" gasped Mrs. Dewey.

"But that's no sign you never will, aunt," said Kate. Evidently the mischievous elf enjoyed the old lady's sore perplexity.

"But, Kate," suggested little Helen, who had sat by demurely listening, "suppose you fall in love with somebody else?"

"I fall in love!" said Kate, with a merry, mocking laugh. "Best assured, Helen, I shall never commit any such absurd piece of folly as that! Haven't I told you forty thousand times that I intend only to marry for money? It may sound a little conceited, but I do consider myself a jewel, and I want a choice setting—a bird that will sing only in a gilded cage! Helen, you shall be my bride's-maid when I marry Lawrence Emmett!"

Things were at this interesting juncture when, one delicious moonlight evening, Miss Mayo came home under convoy of a tall, handsome young man, who had been recently introduced to her.

"Did you say his name was St. John?" asked curious Helen, when the cavalier servant had gone. "Oh, Kate, how handsome he is!"

"Nothing of the kind," said Kate, tartly; "only rather pleasant looking."

"But who is he, Kate?"

"Oh, I don't know; a clerk in some bank, I believe."

"Poor fellow!" said Helen, reflectively.

"What do you say that for?" asked Kate, suddenly turning round upon her cousin.

"Because, Kate, if he is poor and obscure, and has come within the magic circle of your fascinations—"

"Nonsense!" said Kate, almost angrily. "Do you suppose every man I look at must of necessity fall in love with me? I think you are a goose, Helen Dewey."

Little Helen looked amazed; this was rather an unexpected mood on Kate's part.

As the bright winter days went by Kate changed more and more. Sometimes she was strangely soft and lovable; sometimes capricious, and given to sudden gusts and tears, like April showers, succeeded by brief sunshine.

"Kate," said Mrs. Dewey, coming one evening into the room where Kate sat, gazing out into the twilight, "have you thought about your dress to-morrow evening?"

"To-morrow evening?"

"Yes; at Mrs. Allaire's. Don't you remember? Mr. Emmett is to be there—your rich husband."

Aunt Dewey spoke almost jocosely; she had come to look upon Kate's *château en Espagne* as an actual reality.

"Yes," said Kate, absently; "I remember."

"He saw you at the opera last night, and asked who you were."

"Who did?"

"Mr. Emmett."

Kate looked up with momentary interest.

"Did he? Then perhaps I will wear my blue silk, with the Roman pearls and blue violets in my hair."

Kate looked lovely as Venus of old in that same blue dress with the Roman pearls, and Mr. Emmett, a stout, short man, with a very ruddy face and glassy blue eyes, evidently appreciated her attractions.

"Oh, Kate!" cried Helen, gleefully, as they were rolling homeward in their carriage, "all the girls are envying you. Mr. Emmett is certainly in love with you."

"He's a clumsy old clown, old enough to be my grandfather!" said the ungrateful Kate.

"But he's so rich," pleaded Helen.

"Yes," said Kate, "he is rich."

And that was all that was said.

"Kate," said Mrs. Dewey one morning, coming in with a triumphant air, "I have a grand piece of news for you!"

"And I've got one for you, aunt," said Kate, looking up with eyes that were unwontedly tear-wet.

"Mr. Emmett has called to see me. He requests the privilege of paying his addresses formally to you."

"Tell him he can't have any such privilege."

"Kate!"

"I'm in earnest, aunt. Lawrence St. John has asked me to be his wife, and I have said—Yes!"

"Lawrence St. John—a clerk in a bank, at a salary of three hundred a year!"

"We can live on three hundred a year, aunt, and Lawrence is the dearest fellow that ever breathed. As for being a clerk in the bank, I don't care if he was a street sweeper!"

"But, Kate, I thought you were so bent on a rich marriage."

"Oh, aunt, don't remind me of that! I have been a silly goose, but I have seen my own folly."

"Do you mean to say you will reject Mr. Emmett, a man worth a million at the very least, in favour of this young St. John?"

"Yes, aunt. I love Mr. St. John."

In the last words, spoken very quietly, Aunt Dewey learned the folly of further remonstrance. Miss Mayo, with an inconsistency which is not unusual in girls of eighteen, had decided to set all her previous declarations totally at defiance. She had laughed at love all her days. Love was having his revenge at last.

Mr. Emmett was not to be put off thus. He insisted on a personal interview, not satisfied unless he learned his fate from Miss Mayo's own rosebud lips.

"So you won't have me?" he said, brusquely.

"I'm very much obliged to you, sir," said Kate, falteringly, "but—I would rather not."

"Like somebody else better, eh?"

"Yes, sir."

"St. John, eh? penniless fellow, with nothing on earth but a handsome face!"

"You are wrong, sir," said Kate, firing up. "He has a noble nature and loyal soul."

"All humbug!" quietly commented Mr. Emmett.

"However, do as you like. I've nothing to say. Only I thought you wanted a rich husband!"

Kate coloured scarlet—the old folly came back to taunt her.

"We shall be rich, sir," she said, softly—"rich in our own love and mutual confidence."

"I suppose, now," said the ruddy-faced old gentleman, "you would not believe me if I said that you were going to be Mrs. Lawrence Emmett after all?"

"No, sir; I should not, meet certainly."

"It's the solemn truth, notwithstanding. Lawrence Emmett will be your husband!"

Kate looked at Mr. Emmett—was he going crazy?

"He is telling you the truth, Kate," said a gentle voice behind her, and she turned to feel her hand in the clasp of Mr. St. John. "When you are married to me, you will be the wife of Lawrence St. John Emmett."

"And my daughter-in-law," chuckled the old gentleman, gleefully. "Kate, Kate, we've been too much for you, you little fortune-hunter. You've promised to marry a bank clerk, just because you fell in love with him, and you'll marry Mr. Emmett the millionaire, after all!"

Yes, Kate Mayo had been outgeneralled. The stratagem by which Lawrence Emmett had won her disinterested love had succeeded, and the little wayward, capricious bird had folded its wings within the gilded cage, in spite of fate!

Kate kept her word, and Helen Dewey was bride's-maid to Mrs. Lawrence Emmett after all.

A. 22.

HONESTY PRE-EMINENT.—Common sense and common honesty, it has been said, are only spoken of, and very rarely practised, by common folks; but it is not very clear to me that common folks are the only ones of Heaven's creation who stand most in need of the very essential two first-mentioned requisites. I therefore take leave to say, without fear of contradiction, that there are thousands among what is termed the upper circle of society, who have no claim whatever to the honour of such embellishments, or of sympathy for the misfortunes of the well-deserving, so long as they themselves are doing well. Nor does common sense, without common honesty, always lead the most excited mind into the higher paths of virtue. Nevertheless, there are, happily, tens of thousands of feeling hearts in the world who possess both the capacity and the will to perform those bright and useful offices so essential among those whose destiny it is to move

in the lower grades of society, and by which means they learn those useful appendages to human nature, and which are calculated to save them from utter ruin, and ultimately bring them into the practice of noble deeds.

J. A.

FACETIÆ.

A DETROIT lady was recently surprised with the gift of a valuable set of diamonds from her Quaker aunt. They were accompanied by the following epistle: "These may find them convenient, Catherine in case of necessity."

"WHY, you had better knock the door down. What do you want?" "Och, my darling, don't let me wake any of your family. I'm just using your knocker to wake the people next door. I'm looked out, d'ye see, and they've niver a knocker." Rap! rap! rap!

A RACY FACT.

"Well, Cissy, and what does the English Constitution consist of?"

"Of Aristocracy, Democracy, and a—Hypo-crazy." [Bravo, little Miss! Quite right, too.]—Judy.

LATEST FASHIONS.

Augusta: "Oh, Ada dear, what a sweet head-dress! Where did you get it?"

Ada: "It's quite new, dear. It only arrived to-day from Paris in a balloon, or by balloon-post."—Punch.

MALAPROPIANA.—After sending Count Bismarck's description of Paris as a "madhouse full of monkeys," Mrs. Malaprop observed that she thought it only natural that the Parisians should resort to a gorilla warfare.—Punch.

To C. E.'s.—Mrs. Malaprop's youngest son, the civil engineer, is at present in India, so she has no one to tell her what the gentleman meant who has lately been reading a paper all about the coffee-dams which were used in making the Thames Embankment. She would be glad to know where she could get a good cup.—Punch.

REAL DARING.

M'Phusky (Scottish Partner): "Any war news this morning, Brown?"

Brown (English ditto): "Well, freights are low, money seems to be tight, and Consols have fallen two—"

M'Phusky: "Na, but war news, I mean."

Brown (risking the operation): "Well, you wouldn't wish to hear war news than that, would you?"—Punch.

JUST VENGEANCE.

This is from the Daily News. The correspondent at Metz writes:

"I was much amused by an item in last night's orders from Prince Frederick Charles's head-quarters. It was to the effect that, whereas an unprincipled macul of a Hamburg cigar merchant had been selling boxes of cigars to the troops, the upper tier of which consisted of good weeds, while the lower ones were unmitigated trash, the military authorities of any place where this astute gentleman should present himself, were enjoined to lay hold of him, and transmit him to Prince Frederick Charles's head-quarters at Cerny."

Surely, the most vehement anti-German (if he be a smoker) must admire the prince for this noble action. It is a brave "protest against sham." Such outrages as that of the Hamburg cigar merchant are every day committed in England, but we, alas, have no means of serving the sinners out. We hope the fellow will be caught, and that his epitaph will state his crime for the edification of all other wicked tobaccoists in the world.—Punch.

DOG ENGLISH.

We have heard of dog-Latin. The English of the following advertisement seems to be of a canine nature:

"GREYHOUND Dog (fawn) Stolen, 20th inst., from S—. Answers to 'Jock.' Broken tail. Any information regarding the guilty party will be rewarded on applying to Mr. —, — Street. If found in possession of any person after this date will be prosecuted."

Information, like virtue, will be its own reward; we should have thought it fairer to reward the person who gave the information. But Mr. — seems to have wild ideas of justice, or why should he prosecute the dog for being found in any one's possession? We should have thought he would punish the person in unlawful possession of the dog!—Pun.

SLIGHTLY INQUISITIVE.—"Look here, squire, where was you born?" said a persistent Yankee to a five minutes' acquaintance. "I was born," said the victim, "in Boston, Tremont Street, No. 44, left hand side, on the 1st day of August, 1810, at five o'clock in the afternoon, physician, Dr. Warren; nurse, Sally Benjamin." Yankee was answered completely. For a moment he was struck. Soon, however, his face brightened, and he quickly said, "Yea, wa! I calculate you don't recollect whether it was a frame or brick house, dew ye?"

CANDIDATES FOR SERVICE.

A young lady, highly connected, is willing to accept the situation of governess to the daughters of

an opulent tradesman. 'Would have no objection to be treated as one of the family.

The friends of a nobleman's son, whose father has been reduced to bankruptcy by losses on the turf, are desirous of procuring him a situation as page, in the household of some wealthy capitalist, or successful speculator, or other mercantile man, who, having made a princely fortune, would like to maintain a scion of the British aristocracy in the capacity of buttons, wherein he would not only answer an ornamental purpose, but also make himself useful.

A literary gentleman, long connected with the sporting press, having arrived at conviction, is game for an engagement on a serious paper. Is up to a few things, and believes he could introduce a new element into pantile journalism.

Groom. A half-pay officer in the army, rank that of captain, of steady, sober habits, agreeable manners, and personal appearance which may be ascertained from his photograph, which he will forward on application to any lady in ample circumstances, wants the place of bridegroom.

A corpulent philosopher, of sedentary habits, is sighing for the situation of hall porter.—Punch's Pocket-book for 1871.

FREEWILL.

NEVER say Fate is relentless,

Never say man hath no power

O'er the current of the river,

Sweeping deathward hour by hour;

God hath given each one living

Of Freewill some little dower.

Often vain the hoping, planning,

Dreaming, toiling of our lives;

Each may lose the tempting portion,

Love or gold, for which he strives;

Fades each fair flower in our gardens,

Drips the honey from our lives.

But whatever be our sorrow,

And whatever be our blight,

No'er did God refuse the power

To any man of doing right;

It has never been impossible

To be upright in His sight.

Each commandment that is written

We may keep unbroken still;

Living purely, speaking truly,

Doing no one any ill:

In the choice 'twixt good and evil,

Naught can rob us of Freewill.

M. K. D.

GEMS.

YOUNG folks tell what they do; old ones what they have done; and fools what they will do.

FRIENDS should be very delicate and careful in administering pity as a medicine, when enemies use the same article as poison.

SOME of us fret inwardly, and some fret outwardly. The latter is the better plan for our friends, but the worse for ourselves.

TRUE friendship increases as life's end approaches, just as the shadow lengthens every degree the sun declines towards setting.

GLUTTONY is the source of all our infirmities, and the fountain of all our diseases. As a lamp is choked by a superabundance of oil, a fire extinguished by excess of fuel, so is the natural health of the body destroyed by intemperate diet.

Of all passions, gaming is the most dangerous and inexcusable. A gamester endeavours to enrich himself with the spoils of those he calls his friends. But how many armies are in arms against him! Behold that mother! her tears reproach him with the ruin of her only son! That father pronounces his name with horror and contempt to his children! Pursued by hatred, overwhelmed by calumny, he feels himself condemned by reason and humanity; and, after wandering long in the mazes of vice, he finds nothing before his eyes but ruin and remorse.

HOUSEHOLD TREASURES.

CHEESE CAKES.—Take 4 quarts of new milk, put rennet to it, and when it is come, tie it up in a cloth, so that all the whey may drain out; then take 1lb. of butter, and with a spoon rub it with the curd through a hair sieve, and add to it the yolks of 12 eggs, 12 spoonfuls of rosewater, and 2 grated nutmegs, sugar to your taste, and 1lb. of currants, clean washed and picked. Mix together and so bake them. For the crust.—Take 1lb. of fine flour, 6oz. of sugar, the yolks of three eggs, two spoonfuls of sack, and as much butter as will make it into a paste without more wetting; it must be rolled thin.

CANAPES OF ANCHOVIES AND CHICKEN.—Cut some pieces of bread, either square, oblong, or round,

and fry them on one side in butter; then take some cold chicken; pound it and pass it through a wire sieve; season with a little salt and cayenne pepper; put in a little cream, make it hot, and spread each piece with the preparation; on this lay some small slices of anchovies.

SPINACH SOUP.—First prepare your spinach as above directed; boil it about six or seven minutes; after pressing the water out, put it into a stewpan with some butter, a little flour, a small onion, and two or three sprigs of parsley; fry it on the stove for a short time, and then add a little good stock, and let it simmer slowly for about twenty minutes; next pass it through a fine hair sieve, put it back into the stewpan, add a small pat of butter, a piece of glaze, a little sugar and salt; let it boil, and serve with little croutons of fried bread.

STATISTICS.

INDIAN IMPORTS AND EXPORTS.—The last statistical abstract relating to British India shows that during the year ended March, 1869, the imports amounted to 50,943,191*l.*, and the exports to 53,706,330*l.* sterling. Merchandise imported by sea from foreign countries was valued at 35,793,767*l.*, and treasure at 15,149,424*l.*, of which, including merchandise and treasure, 21,321,371*l.* went to Bengal; 1,884,844*l.* to British Burmah; 4,104,792*l.* to Madras, and 24,123,314*l.* to Bombay. An analysis of the value of the principal articles imported shows that cotton goods were valued at 15,453,476*l.*; railway materials at 1,526,780*l.*; metals of all kinds at 3,211,408*l.*; cotton twist and yarn at 2,531,654*l.*; machinery at 730,295*l.*; and malt liquors at 325,202*l.* Of the exports, merchandise and treasure to the value of 21,367,819*l.* was sent from Bengal; 2,254,663*l.* from British Burmah; 6,114,041*l.* from Madras, and 23,770,307*l.* from Bombay. The epitome of exports shows that the value of raw cotton exported during the year was 19,707,877*l.*; of opium, 10,605,654*l.*; of jute and jute manufactures, 2,070,242*l.*; of hides and skins, 1,230,932*l.*; of cotton goods, including twist and yarn, 1,329,944*l.*; of coffee, 1,111,027*l.*; and of grain and pulse, 2,650,898*l.* The total of all merchandise was 52,316,486*l.*; and of treasure, 1,390,844*l.*

MISCELLANEOUS.

THE sword which the Emperor Napoleon surrendered to King William at Sedan has been given to the Prussian Military College at Berlin, to be preserved side by side with that of the first Napoleon. By what right is the first Emperor Napoleon's sword in Berlin?

THE BYRON TITLE.—We are informed that the barony of Byron devolves, not upon the Hon. and Rev. A. Byron, youngest brother of the late peer, but upon Mr. George Byron, the son of the next brother, the late Hon. Frederick Byron. The new Lord Byron was born in 1855.

TWENTY artisans, lately employed in the Government Small Arms Factory at Enfield, have left England for Constantinople. They have been engaged by the Turkish Government for two years, to take charge of the conversion and manufacture of rifles on the Snider principle.

A DECRET, signed by M. Gambetta, as Minister of War, dated Tours, November 10, authorises the prefects to accept offers of church bells to be melted down for the manufacture of cannon, and directs that the names of the contributing parishes shall be inscribed upon the guns which are thus produced.

THE French papers attribute the following saying to Bismarck respecting the Russian difficulty:—"As for Austria, she will do nothing, and England will help her to do it. Gladstone is a hare; and I doubt if John Bull will succeed in making him fire a pistol-shot. In any case our cannon will prevent the union."

We seem at last to have got hold of a well-authenticated instance of a life reaching beyond a hundred years. A Mrs. Hicks died in the Brentford workhouse a few days ago, at the age, it is said, of 104 years. In the obituary notice of this remarkable old woman that appears in the Times, we are told that she was born on the 11th of August, 1766, and baptised at Broseley Church, Salop, on the 15th of February, 1767.

THE PRINCESS LOUISA'S BRIDESMAIDS.—The following is the correct list of the bridesmaids chosen for the marriage of the Princess Louisa:—Lady Constance Seymour, daughter of the Marquis of Hertford; Lady Elizabeth Campbell, daughter of the Duke of Argyll; Lady Florence Lennox, daughter of the Duke of Richmond; Lady Mary Butler, daughter of the Marquess of Ormonde; Lady Alice Fitzgerald, daughter of the Marquis of Kildare; Lady Grace Gordon, daughter of the Dowager Marchioness of Huntly; Lady Florence Montagu, daughter of the Earl of Sandwich; and Lady Agatha Russell, daughter of Earl Russell.

I've Something to tell You.

Words by P. S.

BALLAD.

Music by FRED MORTON.

VOICE. *dolce e press.*

Vivace e dolce.

PIANO. *pf*

Come out in the beau-ti-ful
Come out where the bar-ley is

sun - shine; Come out in the gold - en glow; Oh! come while the morn - ing Ze - - phyr's Are
wa - ving, And qui-ver-ing un-der the breeze, And the tas-sels are dancing so light - - ly, To the

lento.

whisp-ring soft and low. Come, roam with me o - ver the mea - dows, Where the grass is so soft and
hum of the mur - m'ring bees. Come out to the sha-dow-y wood - land, Where the trees are all em - 'rald

lento.

dolce. *ad lib.*

green, I have something so sweet to tell you, My beau-ti-ful, beau-ti-ful Queen; I have
green, For I've something so sweet to tell you, My beau-ti-ful, beau-ti-ful Queen; For I've

lento.

dolce e lento. *dolce.* *vivace.* *dim.*

something so sweet to tell you, My beau-ti-ful, beau-ti-ful Queen.

p colla voce.

You are bright as a flower this morning,
With your ribbons of scarlet and snow;
I knew you would come, my darling,
My heart had foretold me so.

You wish me to tell you my secret?
Oh, can you not guess what I mean?
Then I'll tell you, my dearest: I love you!
My beautiful, beautiful Queen.

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